



Half Hour
Prayers
at the Cross

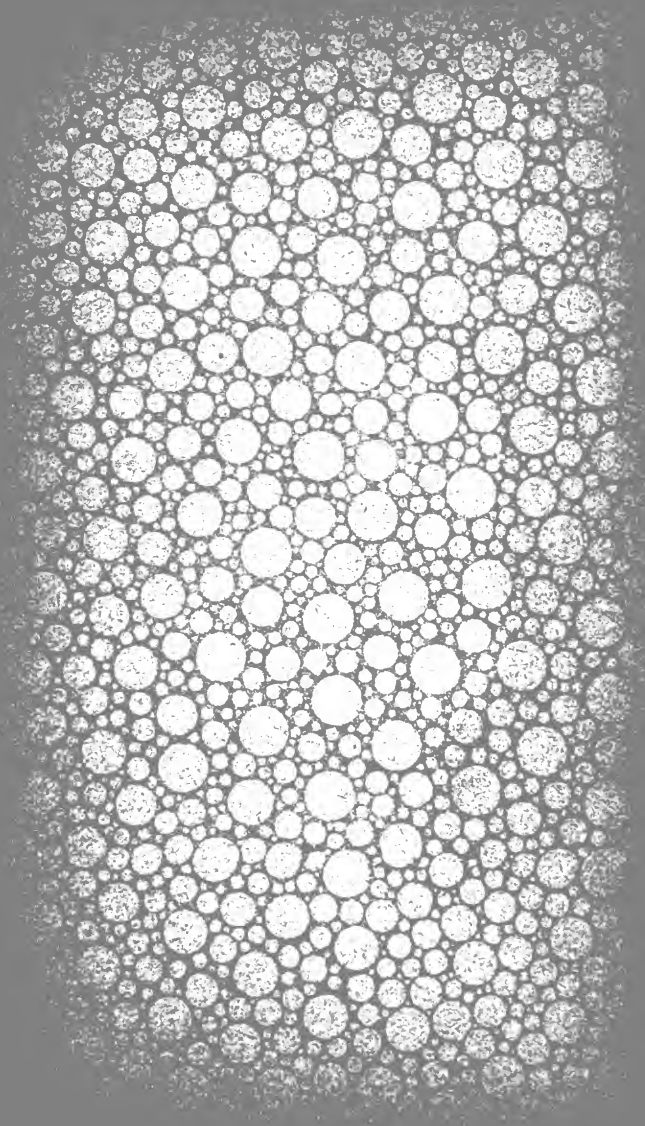
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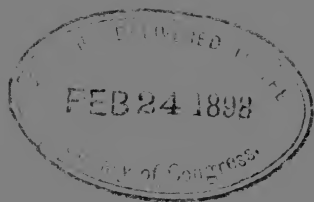
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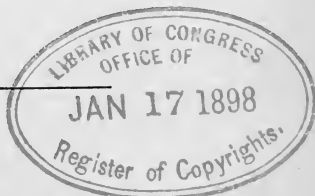


HALF-HOUR STUDIES AT THE CROSS

James
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"Heavenward Way," "Alone With God," Etc.

"Be it far from me to glory, save in the Cross of our
Lord Jesus Christ."—Paul.



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TO ALL WHO HAVE FOUND PEACE AND PARDON

At the Cross of Christ

THIS LITTLE VOLUME, WRITTEN IN HIS NAME,

IS LOVINGLY DEDICATED BY

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

IN the churches of the Current Reformation the Lord's Supper is given a central place in the Lord's day worship. Representing, as it does, the death of Christ for the sins of the world,—a fundamental fact in the Christian faith,—it is altogether proper that it should have this prominence in the public worship of Christ's disciples. The testimony of the Acts of Apostles, together with the corroborative evidence of contemporary profane history, leaves little room for doubt that the church of the first century observed this memorial institution every first day of the week, and that such observance was a chief reason for the Lord's day assembly. Its proper observance may be made a great stimulus to piety and to personal consecration to Christ's service. But, in the absence of any preparation of mind or heart for its observance, and without the presence, often, of anyone who has given special

thought to the institution and its deep spiritual significance, it may easily become the merest formality, and utterly fail to accomplish the purpose for which it was instituted. To offer some assistance in the way of preventing such degeneration of a divine ordinance is the purpose of this series of brief studies at the cross. The author has often been impressed with the many-sidedness of the ordinance—the different phases of truth illustrated and enforced by it—and in this series of devotional studies he has aimed to present some reflections which have been awakened in his own mind, and some lessons which have been impressed on him by the observance of this sacred ordinance. If these shall serve to promote a deeper reverence in the house of God, and a more worthy, because more thoughtful, participation of the Lord's Supper, the author's purpose in the publication of this little volume will have been accomplished.

J. H. G.

Rose Hill, St. Louis, }
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HALF-HOUR STUDIES AT THE CROSS.

I.

SUBMISSION.

If thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done.—*Luke 22:42.*

WE are here merging into the dark shadows of the cross. Its chill penumbra has already fallen on the heart of the World's Redeemer. Gethsemane is the prelude to Calvary. It is the cross anticipated, realized, felt, with all its weight of shame and bitter agony. The scene is well calculated to fill our souls with deep awe and sympathetic sorrow. It is night, and the full moon sheds its silvery light down from a Syrian sky. Stillness, characteristic of Oriental cities at night, has fallen upon Jerusalem. The olive trees wave their solemn branches in the passing breeze, and through them

the chequered moonlight falls upon the smooth sward. Yonder, where the shadows of the olive trees are deepest, is the figure of the lone Sufferer—the Man of Sorrows. A stone's throw away, but within hearing distance in the stillness of the night, are three of His most trusted disciples — Peter, James and John. They see through the shadows, by the aid of the straggling moon-beams, their Master, now kneeling with uplifted face, now prostrate upon the ground, and they hear the broken utterances of His prayer, repeated again and again: “If thou wilt remove this cup from me, O my Father, well; nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done!” We shall never know, perhaps, all the bitter ingredients that entered into that cup of sorrow, which His agonizing spirit asked to be removed, if possible. It were absurd, however, to suppose that it was the mere dread of physical pain and agony that filled His soul with unutterable sorrow, and caused the bloody sweat-drops to fall from His face. “It was the burden and

the mystery of the world's sin which lay heavy on His heart; it was the tasting, in the divine humanity of a sinless life, the bitter cup which sin had poisoned; it was the bowing of the Godhead to endure a stroke to which man's apostasy had lent such frightful possibilities." Only this can account for that depth of emotion which He was unwilling that even His closest disciples should witness, save at a distance. Hence, when the horror of great darkness fell upon His soul, He tore Himself away, reluctantly (so the Greek word implies), from His disciples, that He might suffer and pray alone. His prayer was heard, and strength was granted for the ordeal that was to follow. How bravely, calmly and heroically He bore Himself, before the Sanhedrim, before the Judgment Seat of Pilate, and on the Cross! "Socrates died like a philosopher, but Jesus Christ like a God!" The victory of submission to His Father's will, won in Gethsemane, made victory possible on the cross.

In every great contest which the soul

has to wage with Wrong, there is always a preliminary struggle preceding that which the world sees and knows about; it is the heart's struggle with itself—the conflict of inner forces contending for the mastery. The world knows of David Livingstone's heroic contest with the savage tribes, the jungles and the fever of Africa, but it knows little or nothing of the struggle with self which preceded that outward conflict, in which he turned away from the alluring paths of earthly pleasure and worldly honor and dedicated his life to the work of missions. Without the first victory the others would have been impossible. The first victory was the merging of his own will into the will of God. So with all who have renounced the sinful pursuits and pleasures of the world and have consecrated themselves to the service of God and humanity. This renunciation is the result of a faith that perceives the eternal, the enduring, and recognizes its supreme value, in contrast with the fleeting pleasures of time and sense. Hence John says: "This is the

victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." Faith itself—such a faith as merges the human will into the divine—is a victory, and this victory evermore precedes the overcoming of the world. When Jesus could say, "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done," the subjugation of the world was assured.

Let this lesson, then, teach us the duty of submission to the divine will. Let these sacred emblems of His broken body and of His shed blood, plead with us, trumpet-tongued, to submit our wills to the will of God. The cup that our Father giveth us to drink, shall we not drink it? It may be the cup of poverty, of humiliation, of persecution, of affliction, of fiery trials. But in all these experiences let us imitate our Master, and in His strength say: "Nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done!" Whoso, by the grace of God, is enabled to pray this prayer of submission is prepared for the worst which this world can offer. As oft as we eat of this bread and drink of this cup, let the duty of submission to God's will be

impressed upon our hearts. In vain do we sit at the Lord's table, if we leave it to murmur at God's providences, and at our hard lot in life. When life's battles press hard upon us, and its burdens seem too heavy to bear; when our path leads through some Gethsemane, and our soul is exceedingly sorrowful, then let the vision of the lone Sufferer in the Garden come before us, while we repeat His prayer, "Not my will, but thine, be done!"

II.

LOYALTY TO TRUTH.

To this end have I been born, and to this end am I come into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.—*John* 18: 37.

THE struggle in the garden is over. Jesus, girded now for the final conflict, has passed through the mock trial before Caiaphas, and stands at the bar of Pilate, the Roman governor. His wily foes, in order to prejudice his case with Pilate, mentioned his claim to kingship, as in rivalry with Cæsar. This led Pilate to inquire of Jesus, “Art thou a king then?” to which the majestic prisoner replied, in effect: “Yes, I am a king; but not of your kind of a kingdom. Mine is the kingdom of truth. I came into this world to bear witness to the truth. For so doing I am arraigned at your bar and am to be put to death.” No wonder these words puzzled the patronizing and time-serving Pilate, and led him to ask, contemptuously, “What is *truth*?” It is

easy to discern in that question of Pontius Pilate the same sneer which has often since then characterized the utterances of politicians when confronted by a grave moral issue. "What is truth, or morality, or conscience, to party success and personal aggrandizement?" is the *meaning*, if not the *form*, of many of the political subterfuges of our day.

In this bold declaration of Jesus, He declares the purpose of His coming into the world. It is to "bear witness to the truth." But what if the very truths which need to be declared are so unpopular that He who dares to testify to them must suffer the penalty of death—even the death of the cross? So be it; He will not shrink from the task, even though it involve the bitter cup of death. In His announcement of the true conditions of blessedness, in His delineation of the kind of kingdom He had come to establish, in His denunciation of the hollowness of the religious pretensions of the Scribes and Pharisees, Jesus had come into deadly antagonism with the religious

authorities of His nation. This was inevitable. He knew what would be the consequences of His course, and knowing this, swerved not a hair's breadth from the great purpose of His mission. From the cradle to the cross; from the carpenter's bench to the bar of Pilate, he spoke the truth, He lived the truth, He *was* the truth. Neither poverty, persecution, ecclesiastical proscription nor Roman power could turn Him from His predetermined path of duty. Even satanic fury beat in vain against that loyal, loving heart. Unawed in the presence of Pilate, He declares His mission as boldly as to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. It was this uncompromising loyalty to the truth that brought Jesus to the cross, that by means of it He might more effectively declare the truth of God's love for the world.

Let us pause, thoughtfully, in the presence of these symbols of His body and His blood, and let them speak to our hearts and to our consciences of this wonderful phase of Christ's character. What

lofty courage! What noble heroism! What supreme devotion to truth! Does not His example appeal to us, as His followers, to be courageous and heroic in defense of the truth? Are we worthy to be called Christ's disciples, if from considerations of earthly gain, or from fear of our personal popularity, we turn aside from the truth as God has given us to see it? Suppose it involves loss of worldly goods, forfeiture of position, honor, and even life itself! Are we better than our Master? What severe condemnation does this example give to that miserable, cowardly, time-serving policy, which is conveniently silent in the presence of great popular evils, and which, under the false plea of superior fidelity to the Gospel, shuns to denounce the sins of our own age!

Among the many lessons which this institution may well serve to impress on our minds, we are sure that the duty of unflinching loyalty to the truth holds a prominent place. Nor let us forget the sequel. When Christ surrendered Him-

self unreservedly into the hands of His Father, by bearing witness unto the truth even unto death, His Father took care of Him. "Wherefore God hath highly exalted Him and given Him a name that is above every name." God always takes care of those who trust Him. They may be led to cry out in the fierce agony of breaking hearts, "Why hast Thou forsaken me?" but the end will show that God forsakes no one who commits his soul to Him in well doing.

Christ bore witness to the truth, not only by what He said and did, but also by what He *was*. The silent, out-raying influence of a holy character is often more potent in rebuking impurity and winning the disobedient and gainsaying than any amount of teaching. Not every one can bear witness to the truth in powerful, convincing discourse, but it is within the power of every humble disciple of Jesus to testify to the power of the Gospel in a life that reflects the character of Jesus Christ. Such a life, too, often requires quite as much moral courage as the life

that is lived more in the public gaze. Always and everywhere it is alike the duty and the privilege of every Christian in his own sphere of life to "bear witness to the truth."

O for that serene courage that marked the life of Christ, and enabled Him to always bear witness to the truth! Let this memorial feast be to us an inspiration to such lofty heroism.

III.

THE DUTY OF FORGIVENESS.

Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.
Luke 22: 34.

THE Garden, the Judgment Seat, and the Cross. These are the steps taken by our Lord on his way to glorification. We have lingered in our previous studies on the first two of these scenes, and come now to the darker shadows of the third. Pilate, yielding principle to policy, has delivered the Just and the Innocent One into the hands of His enemies, and they have done what they desired with Him. Along the *Via Dolorosa* He bore the heavy cross until His frame, weakened by fasting, mental agony, loss of sleep and cruel scourging, fainted beneath its burden. And this, dear Lord, for me!

“ Must Jesus bear the cross alone,
And all the world go free ?
No, there's a cross for every one,
And there's a cross for me. ”

The cross was lifted from the prostrate Sufferer and laid on Simon of Cyrene, who bore it to the place of crucifixion. Happy Simon, to be honored with sharing this cross-bearing with the Lord of glory! And yet is not this privilege open to every one who desires to enter into the "fellowship of the sufferings of Christ" by sharing the burden of the world's conversion, or by championing a true but unpopular reform? When the procession had reached the fatal spot at Golgotha, the cross was laid down until the sinless victim was nailed to it—his hands to the cross-beam, and his feet to the upright piece. Then the cross was uplifted, while the flesh was rent and torn by the weight of the body, even though partially supported by a wooden projection near the center of the cross, as was sometimes the case. It is thought that it was at this moment of inconceivable horror and agony that Jesus uttered the pathetic prayer for his cruel enemies: "*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.*" Where in all history is there

recorded a triumph to be compared with this? If ever there were reason and justification for calling down the vengeance of God upon evil-doers, surely this occasion furnished such reason. One who was the incarnation of truth, purity and love, and who had devoted Himself, unsparingly, to the welfare of men, had been falsely accused, maligned, misjudged, persecuted and rejected, and was now undergoing the tortures of an ignominious death on the cross, breathes a prayer of forgiveness for those who were inflicting these cruelties upon Him! He had divested Himself of the glory which He had with the Father before the world was in order that He might share our burdens and sorrows, show us the true life, and win all men back to loving allegiance to God. But alas! those whom He came to save are putting Him to a cruel death. Does not this awful wickedness prove the failure of his mission and show that men are beyond the reach of redemption? "No," His prayer seems to say, "my enemies, even, are not so bad as their

treatment of me would seem to indicate. They do not understand what they are doing. They neither know me nor my mission to this world. They are the victims of false teaching, of prejudice and of ignorance. Did they but know how truly I love them, and how I am even willing to die that I may reveal to them the Father's love and bring them to God, they would feel and act very differently; but they are blind and cannot see; therefore forgive them, Father; they know not what they do!" What divine magnanimity! What largeness of moral vision! What nobleness of character! Compare with it our little spites, envies, jealousies and hard, unforgiving spirits, standing on punctilios, and refusing to forgive and to be reconciled until due acknowledgments are made to us! How it reveals our essential littleness of spirit and narrowness of vision! It ought to shame us into profound humility and contrition of soul.

No large nature is unforgiving. That is an unfailing mark of commonplace mediocrity or littleness. A great soul pities

and forgives, where a little one hates and cherishes malice towards an enemy. It is the latter class who hold it to be impossible to love our enemies and to pray for those who despitefully use us. Christ's spirit entering into a human soul creates greatness. It was the Christ in Stephen that enabled him, amid the falling shower of stones, to cry out with his expiring breath, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge!" To be incapable of exercising this spirit of forgiveness towards those who wrong us, is to give the most positive proof that we have not received the spirit of Christ and hence are none of His.

What more valuable lesson can we allow these eloquent symbols of Christ's death to teach us, to-day, than the duty of forgiveness? Is not the Christ whom we love speaking to us to-day, through these emblems of His body and blood, in pleading tones, urging us not only to be reconciled to God, but with one another? Are there not many of us who cherish bitterness in our hearts, and have hard, unforgiving spirits toward certain of our breth-

ren whom we believe to have wronged us in some way? How can we, how dare we, partake of these emblems in such a spirit? Reminded, as we are, by this memorial feast that we have been redeemed and reconciled to God by the death of Christ, who, while we were yet enemies, died for us, let us bury, in the grave of forgetfulness, all our grievances and alienations, and love as brethren. If Christ so loved us, and forgave us, we ought also to so love and forgive one another.

IV.

FORSAKEN OF GOD.

Eloi, Eloi, lama, sabachthani?—*Mark* 15: 34.

WE are nearing now the closing scenes of the crucifixion. From nine o'clock in the forenoon until three in the afternoon, Jesus has hung upon the cross, enduring the taunts and jeers of his enemies and the unutterable agony of the crucifixion. Toward the close of this period of indescribable suffering, when even the sun could not dispel the gathering gloom and darkness which hung over the doomed city and nation, the majestic Sufferer cried out, in words whose infinite pathos has touched all the intervening ages, "Eloi, Eloi, lama, sabachthani?"—Aramaic words, meaning, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

We shall probably never be able to fathom the meaning of this mysterious cry of a breaking heart. Perhaps we shall nearer approach its true meaning if

we bear in mind our Lord's real and perfect humanity, and regard it as the cry of a loving, loyal, trusting spirit, whose culminating anguish is the obscuration, for the moment, of the Father's face. His cup of human suffering would not have been full—would have lacked the last and bitterest ingredient—had there not come over Him a darkness so dense as to hide the face of God. In all His previous experiences He seems to have walked in conscious fellowship with His Father. When His enemies persecuted Him, when many of His followers turned away from Him, offended at His sayings, when even His chosen ones forsook Him and fled, leaving Him alone with His enemies, He had the consciousness of His Father's presence and approval. But now, in this awful and supreme crisis, when He is bearing the iniquities of us all, and tasting death for every man, when the world's ingratitude is heaping upon Him insult and agony in return for His wonderful love and His life of beneficence, what wonder that His agonizing human nature

cried out, in the words of the psalmist: "My God, my God, why hast *thou* forsaken me?" It is the cry of a soul conscious of its rectitude, of its righteous purposes, and of the justness of its claim on God's sympathy and protection. It implies that the Suffering One feels that He is suffering according to God's will, and for the accomplishment of God's purposes.

Have there not been experiences in many of our lives which help us to understand this pathetic cry of our expiring Lord? We have been called to pass under shadows so deep that they seemed to shut the light of heaven out of our lives. And this experience has come to us when we have been trying, in human weakness, but in sincerity of purpose, to walk in the path of duty. We cannot connect the overwhelming darkness which has eclipsed the heavens, and even the very face of God, with any conscious departure from the way of righteousness and truth. We call upon God, and He seems to hear us not. The wicked flourish, and we, trying

to do God's will, are left to languish and moan out our lamentations in darkness. In such moments have we not felt that the words of the psalmist, uttered by our Lord in a higher and deeper sense, would fitly express our own feelings? It does *seem* to us, for the time, that God has forsaken us. It matters not that faith, and even reason, on reflection, would assure us that God cannot forsake those who are doing His will. The cry is the utterance of the soul's pent-up anguish, and not faith's calm decision or reason's cool logic.

If it be asked why these experiences of anguish and sorrow come to the Christian, even as unto others, and sometimes more than to others, the full answer must be waited for until the light of eternity shall shine upon all our dark problems. Meantime it is enough to know, and to be able to say, "Even so, Father; for so it seemeth good in Thy sight." And yet, we are not left without light on the general problem of human suffering. The Scriptures clearly teach that it has a di-

vine mission in the perfection of human character. Even Jesus Christ Himself, the sinless One, was "made perfect through suffering." No doubt that portion of His suffering which we have been contemplating in this study—the infinite anguish which wrung from his soul that mysterious cry—had its subjective relation to Christ Himself, as well as its objective or vicarious relation to the needs of the world. He is in profounder and tenderer sympathy with the keenest forms of human sorrow by reason of His own bitter experience on the cross. If, at times, in the poignancy of our grief, we are led to feel that God has forsaken us, we remember that "we have not a High Priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

Does not this incident in the suffering of Christ teach us the important truth that no matter what dire extremity may come upon any child of God, God never forsakes any of His children? Had He

indeed forsaken His well-beloved Son, save in the sense of permitting Him to fill out the measure of suffering for the world's redemption? On the contrary, for that very humiliation and suffering, endured for others, "God highly exalted Him and gave unto Him the name which is above every name." It was the humiliation which exalted Him. It is through the valley of humiliation that we, too, must pass to the mountain of God's exaltation. In our deepest sorrow, then, God has not forsaken us, but is dealing with us as with sons, preparing us for future exaltation. O that these symbols of Christ's humiliation and suffering may remind us anew that God is never more with us than when we are bearing the cross, and passing through the shadows, and that, like our Lord, we must be made perfect through suffering.

V.

A FINISHED WORK.

It is finished.—*John* 19: 30.

THIS was perhaps the last word uttered by Christ on the cross. Just previous to its utterance He had commended His spirit into the hands of His “Father,” coming back to that trustful word again, after the strange, sad cry, which was the theme of our last study. Had there come to His dying vision a glimpse of the Father’s face, shining through the thick darkness, that brought out those tender, trustful words, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit?” Then came the triumphant cry, “It is finished!”—in the Greek only one word—*Tetelestai!* Finished! Victorious word! “Finished was His holy life; with His life His struggle; with His struggle His work; with His work the redemption; with the redemption, the foundation of the new world.” Momentous event in the world’s history,

is attested by quaking earth, rending veil, splitting rocks, and opening tombs. No wonder the centurion, beholding these amazing scenes attending the dying Christ, exclaimed, "Surely this was a Son of God!" Since that day millions of the most intelligent men and women in the world, with a better knowledge of God and of Christ than was possessed by the Roman officer, have exclaimed, "Surely this was the Son of the living God!"

Finished, now, are His sufferings, His sorrows and His indignities. No more shall He endure pangs of hunger, nor pains of weariness. Gethsemane's shadows and Calvary's cross and agony are forever past. The bitter cup of death, from which His human nature shrank, has been drunk to its dregs. Ended, too, are His days of poverty and toil, and His life of lowly humiliation. His earthly course is completed, and the work which He came to accomplish is finished. Potentially, the world has been revolutionized by that death. "It expelled

cruelty; it curbed passion; it branded suicide; it punished and repressed an execrable infanticide; it drove the shameless impurities of heathendom into a congenial darkness. . . . It rescued the gladiator; it freed the slave; it protected the captive; it nursed the sick; it sheltered the orphan; it elevated the woman; it shrouded as with a halo of sacred innocence the tender years of the child. It changed pity from a vice into a virtue. It elevated poverty from a curse into a beatitude. It ennobled labor from a vulgarity into a dignity and a duty. It sanctified marriage from little more than a burdensome convention into little less than a blessed sacrament. It revealed for the first time the angelic beauty of a purity of which men had despaired, and of a meekness at which they had utterly scoffed. It created the very conception of charity, and broadened the limits of its obligation from the narrow circle of a neighborhood to the widest horizons of the race." *

* Farrar's Life of Christ.

But it did all this and more, because it revealed the infinite love of the Father, the awful nature of sin, and opened the way for man's reconciliation with God. Men's relations to God being changed, their relations with each other are necessarily changed. We cannot love God and hate our brother. Christ's death was such an unveiling of the heart of God that His cross has become the symbol of His conquering power. Other great ones of earth conquered men by force; but Jesus Christ conquers by love, and the whole world is flocking to His standard. Other conquerors seek to slay their enemies, but this mighty Conqueror died for His enemies that He might save them from an everlasting death! Other kings and rulers govern men with a rod of power, and, dying, transfer their kingdoms to other men, but this King died that He might establish His kingdom and rule over His subjects with a scepter of love from age to age. Earthly monarchs put on their robes of royalty and surround themselves with pomp and splen-

dor to awe their subjects into allegiance; but Christ divested Himself of the divine glory and took the form of a servant, ministered to others and died upon the cross, to draw all men unto Him.

Such was the nature of that glorious work of which Christ said, with his last breath, "It is finished." No marvel that with a vision of its magnificent results rising before Him, He "endured the cross, despising the shame." Let this memorial of Christ's death teach us, like Paul, to glory in the cross, and to bear it high, as the world's only hope. In this sign we conquer. Let it teach us the supremacy and omnipotence of suffering Love. There is no power so mighty, and none other adequate for the redemption of a lost world. Christ's enemies thought they had defeated His plans and destroyed His work. Even His disciples feared that with the crucifixion all their fond hopes had been defeated. But Christ Himself, with a true insight into the meaning of His death, shouted, "It is finished!" And each passing century attests with

cumulative force the magnitude of the work therein accomplished. Happy he, who, at life's close, has so wrought, under the inspiration of Christ's life and death, and has so fulfilled the mission which God has given him, that he can exclaim, "It is finished!"

VI.

THE SUPPER INSTITUTED.

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and brake it, and he gave to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took a cup, and gave thanks, and gave to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is my blood of the covenant, which is shed for many unto remission of sins.—*Matt.* 26: 26-28.

THE scene is now in the upper chamber in Jerusalem. The time is the evening of the betrayal. The occasion is the paschal supper. Jesus and his twelve apostles are reclining at the table, on which are the unleavened bread, the bitter herbs, the paschal lamb, and the fruit of the vine. The meal was probably eaten in the usual manner. When this observance had ended, and while they yet tarried at the table, “Jesus took bread, and when He had given thanks, He brake it and said, ‘Take, eat; this is my body which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me.’ After the same manner, also, he took the cup, when he

had supped, saying, 'This cup is the New Covenant in my blood, this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me.' "

In these simple words and acts was the Lord's Supper instituted—an ordinance which from that hour until the present has never ceased to be observed by those who love and revere the name of Christ. It has seemed to us better to study the tragic scenes of our Lord's suffering and death, first, that we might the better understand the significance and importance of this institution. Hence we return now from the awful tragedy of the crucifixion, to the quiet upper chamber on that fateful evening of His betrayal. We are here at the beginning of this memorial feast, the very place to ponder over its deep meaning and use. We call attention to a few facts in this study, preparatory to others which are to follow:

1. It is a striking fact, whose significance will not escape the minds of thoughtful students, that this memorial feast was instituted and ordained by our Lord to be observed in the future, *while*

He was yet living, and prior even to His betrayal. This not only shows that His crucifixion was no unexpected termination of his earthly life, but what is even more suggestive of His divine wisdom, it clearly indicates that He knew the meaning of His death and its influence on the world. It is certainly a remarkable fact that one about to suffer public execution in the most shameful and ignominious manner known to men, should deliberately plan to have the memory of that death perpetuated among men through all time! This can mean nothing less than that He knew not only His own innocence, but the purpose for which He was to die, and that His death would "draw all men" unto Him; that the cross would be transformed from an instrument of shame into a symbol of honor and power. In the very hour of what men regarded as defeat, the eye of Jesus saw his rising glory and triumphant victory. "Surely this was the Son of God!"

2. Note the simplicity of the emblems chosen to perpetuate the memory of His

death. He did not select something rare and costly to symbolize His broken body and shed blood, but the simple elements so common, so easy to be procured, and yet so appropriate—a plain loaf of bread and the pure juice of the grape! “This bread,” He says, “is (symbolizes) my body, and this fruit of the vine is my blood, shed for the remission of sins.” This is in perfect harmony with the scriptural style. The attempt to make the passage teach that the bread and wine become the actual flesh and blood of Christ, as taught by the Romish Church, is no less subversive of its spiritual meaning than it is revolting to reason. The very elements in common use for the sustenance of the body are taken to symbolize the soul’s nourishment. As the grain is crushed before it becomes bread and the grape is pressed before it yields its juice, so must the body of the Son of God be broken and His blood poured out before He could become the life of the world. “Except the corn of wheat fall into the ground and die it abideth alone, but if it

die it bringeth forth much fruit." This is the principle Christ taught while living, and illustrated in His death.

3. Most vital of all to be remembered in connection with this sweet and sacred memorial feast is the vicariousness of Christ's death. "This is my body *broken for you*. This is my blood shed for the remission of (your) sins." He did not die for His own sins, for "He did no sin," but "the chastisement of our peace was laid upon Him, and by His stripes are we healed." On Him was laid "the iniquity of us all." "He suffered, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God." "All we like sheep had gone astray," and the Good Shepherd "laid down His life for the sheep" that He might gather us into the loving fold. Our consciences were burdened with guilt, and He died that we might obtain remission of sins. Not as a martyr merely did Christ die. He had power to lay down His life and to take it up again, and he voluntarily laid it down for the life of the world. Blessed be His glorious name

forever! No wonder His praises are sung round the world, and His dominion is an everlasting dominion!

4. May *I* partake of the rich spiritual banquet prepared in Christ's death? That is the great spiritual fact set forth in the *eating* of this bread and *drinking* of this cup. The act of participation of the emblems signifies our spiritual enjoyment of Christ's life. Does the symbol find its fulfillment in our lives? Do we really and truly and consciously live *in* Christ and *by* Christ, so that He is the strength and joy of our lives? O what joy, what gratitude, what assurance, what warm and tender love should fill our hearts as we gather about this table of the Lord and eat and drink in His kingdom!

VII.

FOR THE REMISSION OF SINS.

This is my blood of the covenant which is shed for many unto remission of sins.—*Matt.* 26: 28.

THIS phrase, “Unto remission of sins,” as we have it in the Revised Version, expresses the purpose for which Christ’s blood was shed—the end toward which His death looked. The fact which underlies this statement—not here argued but taken for granted—is the universal sinfulness of the race. It is also assumed that there must be remission of sins in order to man’s happiness, and to the realization of the destiny for which he was created. Nor will either of these assumptions be called in question by any competent person who has studied the problem of sin and human guilt. Our apprehension of the meaning of these words, and of the importance of Christ’s death, will depend very largely upon our conception of sin—its heinous character and its

awful consequences. Sin is the dark background which alone gives significance and value to the cross.

What is sin? It is the transgression of, and nonconformity to, the will of God. It is putting God and His law at defiance. It is exchanging the higher for the lower motive. It is a state of disharmony with God and with man's own moral nature. It is therefore the way to self-destruction. Its sad consequences are alienation from God, self-condemnation, obscuration of the moral vision, falling under the power of evil habit. Its end is death.

The race lay under the power and guilt of sin. It was the mission of Jesus Christ to this world to deliver men from the thralldom and the penalty of sin. In God's infinite wisdom and preordained plan, this was to be accomplished by means of Christ's death.

This is not the place to speculate on the philosophic relation of Christ's death to the remission of sins. Let it suffice our present purpose that Christ died that men, under the condemnation of God's

righteous law, might have remission of sins. That this is the purpose of His death Christ affirms in the words above quoted. His blood was shed for the remission of the sins of the many.

In what light are we to understand the words, "Remission of sins?" In the light, we suppose, of man's needs and God's purpose. Remission of sins implies at least two things of infinite moment to the sinner: (1) His deliverance from the love and bondage of sin; and, (2) his release from its guilt and penalty. Both these results, or classes of results, are accomplished through faith in Christ as the Son of God—such a living, personal, vitalizing faith as leads its possessor to an open confession of, and surrender to, the Lord Jesus.

Nor is it difficult to see why the benefits of Christ's death are conditioned on faith in Him as the Son of God. If He be the Son of God, then His death, for man's sake, is an amazing disclosure of God's love for sinful men, and of His willingness to save them. This "goodness of

God," accepted by faith, leads to repentance and to the public acknowledgment of Christ. In view of this changed heart and purpose, wrought by the power of divine love, as manifested through the cross, it is possible for God to be "just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." He can now extend forgiveness to the sinner in harmony with the principles of His moral government. But let no one suppose that Christ's death brings remission of sins to any whom it does not bring to repentance. These two acts—the one expressing man's attitude to sin, the other God's attitude to the sinner—are bound together by an unchangeable law of the divine government. Thus Christ's apostles were commissioned, after the resurrection, to "preach repentance and remission of sins in His name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."

In view, then, of the meaning of Christ's death, and its relation to the remission of our sins, with what a deep sense of gratitude, and with what fervent

love for Christ, ought we to come to this table of the Lord and partake of these symbols of His broken body and His shed blood! O the infinite debt of love and of service we owe to Him whose death, in our behalf, opened to us the gates of life! Is there any sacrifice too great for us to make, any burden too heavy to bear for His sake? His parting word to His disciples was, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." In what way can we better show our love for Him than by aiding, to the extent of our ability, to publish the glad tidings of remission of sins to the whole creation? May this observance of our Lord's death greatly quicken our zeal in extending His gospel to every creature! May it open to us, too, vast possibilities in the way of personal holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord!

VIII.

CHRIST SUFFERED TO BRING US TO GOD.

Because Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God.—1 *Peter* 3: 18.

IN THIS passage we have the purpose of Christ's death stated in another form from that in our last study. We are not to understand these passages as presenting two distinct purposes of Christ's suffering, but rather as presenting the same great purpose under different aspects. When it is said that Christ shed His blood for the remission of sins, man is conceived as under the condemnation of sin, stained by its guilt, and held a captive by its power, and Christ's blood is said to procure both cleansing from its guilt and release from its power. When it is affirmed, as in the present study, that Christ, the righteous, suffered for the unrighteous, that He might bring us to

God, man is conceived as a wanderer from God, having gone astray, like lost sheep in the wilderness—

“Away on the mountains, wild and bare,
Away from the tender Shepherd’s care.”

The passage assumes what, indeed, requires no argument, namely, man’s alienation and moral separation from God. It is characteristic of inspired writers not to argue what is self-evident. Man’s own conscience tells him that, as a sinner, a violator of God’s will, he is away from God. He knows, too, that he has gone away from God of his own free will, and has preferred to follow the lusts of the flesh rather than the voice of God, speaking through his conscience and through revelation and providence. It is assumed, too, that this is not man’s normal and rightful relation to God; that he was made for God, and must be brought back to Him before he can find the peace and satisfaction for which his soul craves. Is not this truth corroborated by the experience of every one who has lived long in the world and has tested its various

sources of pleasure? Unlimited wealth, exalted position, earthly honors, and all that can please the eye and gratify the senses, can not satisfy the soul's hunger for God. Many others besides Solomon have cried out in the midst of all these material splendors, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!"

Why then did not men go to God without the coming of Christ? The world did not know God, nor by wisdom could it find Him out. It was conscious of its unrest and of its dissatisfaction with its earthly environment, but not conscious that in God alone could be found that which would meet its deepest needs. Christ's mission to the world was to reveal God to men in His true character. He came to "show us the Father." He disclosed to men the heart of God, and taught His disciples to say, "Our Father!" Instead of God being angry at the world and anxious to condemn it, He "so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son" to save it. He "sent not His Son into the world to condemn

the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." To make this love the more manifest, and to give it the highest possible expression, the sinless Son of God submitted to death on the cross in our behalf, that by means of this voluntary suffering for the sins of others He might "bring us to God." This, Peter declares, was the purpose of his suffering.

We need not ask whether the means was adapted to accomplish the end, for it was God's chosen means, and all the pages of Christian history testify to the efficiency of the story of Christ's death to win men away from sin and to turn them to God. Christ's suffering for our sins, once for all, accomplishes this end, (1) by removing whatever obstacles there may have been in the way of man's access to God, such as, (*a*) the "bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us" (Col. 2: 14); (*b*) the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile (Eph. 2: 14, 15), and (*c*) the necessity of vindicating God's justice in

pardoning sin (Rom. 3: 25, 26); and (2) by enabling man to return to God through the open way, by (a) giving man faith in Christ and penitence for sin, and (b) thus drawing him by the power of divine love to accept God's offer of salvation and reconciliation. "Being therefore justified by faith, let us have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, *through whom also we have had our access by faith into this grace wherein we stand.*" (Rom. 5: 1, 2.) "But now in Christ Jesus *ye that once were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ.*" (Eph. 2: 13.)

It is abundantly shown by these and kindred passages that it is by means of Christ's death that we are brought to God—to the knowledge of God, to the love of God, to reconciliation and communion with God. "For ye were going astray like sheep, but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls." It was not, however, until the Good Shepherd came in search of us and found us that we returned to the fold. It is this sentiment, expressed

in four lines of simple verse, that has made one of our most familiar hymns immortal:

“Jesus sought me when a stranger,
Wandering from Thy fold, O God;
He, to rescue me from danger,
Interposed His precious blood.”

While the Church of God stands that song will be sung by the lisping tongues of childhood, by the stalwart voices of redeemed manhood and womanhood, and in the tremulous tones of old age. It appeals to the heart. It expresses what we believe Christ did for us. He it was who sought us, wandering on the dark mountains of sin, and brought us to God. To accomplish this His pathway led through the shadows of Gethsemane and along the *via dolorosa* to Golgotha. But He found us, and with His wounded palm is leading the lost race back to God. Blessed be His glorious name forever and forever!

Dearly beloved, gathered here at the Lord's table, with this great truth pressed home on our consciousness by

these visible emblems, do we not feel drawn by the tenderness and might of His love to come yet nearer to God? Even as Christians we have not walked with God as closely as we should. This institution shall not accomplish for us what it is designed to do unless we are drawn by it into closer and closer fellowship with God. With this aspiration in our hearts let us close this study by singing:

“Nearer, my God, to Thee,
Nearer to Thee;
E’en though it be a cross
That raiseth me.”

IX.

THE NEW COVENANT IN CHRIST'S BLOOD.

This cup is the new covenant in my blood.—1 *Cor.* 11: 25.

THESE words of Christ, uttered on the occasion of the institution of the Lord's Supper, Paul declares he received of the Lord Jesus himself. It was at the meeting-point of two dispensations. In that upper chamber was being observed for the last time, properly and intelligently, the Paschal Supper, now finding its fulfillment in Christ. It was important that His disciples should know that the symbols used in the new memorial feast, then instituted, meant something very different from, and far more important than, the elements used in the Paschal meal. "This cup," he said, "is the new covenant in my blood." In saying this He reminded them that the old order of things was passing away and the new was coming; that this supper related to the

New and not to the Old covenant; that it was to be sealed and established, not by "the blood of bulls and goats," as was the old, but by his own blood. The two emphatic words in the sentence quoted above are *new* and *my*.

This language would remind an intelligent Jew of the prophecy of Jeremiah, concerning the new covenant. As quoted in the Hebrew letter, Jeremiah said:

Behold the days come, saith the Lord,
That I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel
and with the house of Judah;
Not according to the covenant that I made with their
fathers
In the day that I took them by the hand to lead them forth
out of the land of Egypt,
For they continued not in my covenant,
And I regarded them not, saith the Lord.
For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of
Israel
After those days, saith the Lord;
I will put my laws into their mind,
And on their heart also will I write them:
And I will be to them a God,
And they shall be to me a people:
And they shall not teach every man his fellow-citizen,
And every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord:
For all shall know me,
From the least to the greatest of them.
For I will be merciful to their iniquities,
And their sins will I remember no more.

This *new* covenant differs from the old, as above specified, in the following important particulars:

1. Its laws or principles are written on the heart, not on tables of stone. That is, those within this covenant obey God not from an outward force, but from an inward life.

2. The relation between God and such a people is one of peculiar tenderness and intimacy.

3. All the human parties to this covenant are said to be spiritually enlightened. It is the condition of entering into covenant relation with God.

4. Sins are forgiven once for all, under the new covenant. There is no annual remembrance made of them. The offering which Christ made of His own blood, for our sins, suffices to purge them away forever.

The vast superiority of this new covenant over the old may readily be seen. The text which constitutes our present study asserts another marked distinction quite in harmony with the foregoing con-

trast. The new covenant was sealed, or dedicated, not with the blood of animals, but with Christ's own blood. The author of the Hebrews lays it down as a principle that "Where a testament is there must be of necessity the death of the testator." (Heb. 9: 17). This is true of a covenant between God and man, since death is the penalty of sin and all men are sinners. "Sinful man can be brought into communion with the holy God only if provision be made for the forgiveness of his sin, and his restoration to holiness; both of which are provided for by the death of Christ, the Mediator of the New Covenant."

This brings us once more into the presence of the cross, with bowed heads and grateful hearts. How can we contemplate the unspeakable blessings which have come to us through the death of Christ, without feeling our heart warm with gratitude and love! As we partake of these emblems let us be reminded, not only of the benefits which we enjoy within the new and better covenant, but also of our

covenant obligations. There are two parties to a covenant, and in the day of our espousal to Christ we pledged Him our heart's best love and our faithful obedience. This was the meaning of our baptism. It signified our acceptance of Christ's offer of salvation, and our death to sin and resurrection to a new life of righteousness. It is most fitting that in the presence of these sacred emblems, memorials of Christ's sacrifice for us, we ask ourselves whether we are keeping covenant with God, and whether, having died to sin, we are living, henceforth, unto Him who died for us. As we look upon this table of the Lord, and our thoughts turn to Him through whose blood we have been cleansed, and brought into covenant relation with God, can we not each of us sing:

“My faith looks up to Thee,
Thou Lamb of Calvary,
Savior divine.
Now hear me while I pray;
Take all my guilt away;
O let me from this day
Be wholly Thine.”

X.

A MEMORIAL INSTITUTION.

This do in remembrance of me.—1 *Cor.* 11: 24.

ONE of the strongest desires of the human heart is the desire to be remembered. It expresses itself in the vast mausoleums and towering shafts of the world's cemeteries, in the pyramids of Egypt, and in numberless ways less pretentious. The heart recoils from the thought of being forgotten. Especially do we desire to live in the memory of those whom we have loved and for whose welfare we have toiled and suffered. The late President Garfield, whose life was cut short in the midst of his usefulness by the hand of an assassin, said to a friend as he lay on his dying couch, "Do you think my name will live in human history?" This pathetic inquiry was prompted by the laudable desire that his name should be perpetuated in the his-

tory of the country to which he had devoted so many years of public service.

Honorable as we allow this feeling to be, for it is one of the incentives to virtue and heroism, we would not contend that it is in all cases free from an element of selfishness, or self-love. But in the case of our Savior what selfish element could have entered into the desire to be remembered? He was on the eve of His ascension and glorification, when He would be re-invested with the glory which He had with the Father before the world was. He was soon to be surrounded with the angelic throng and to receive from them the adoring homage due to His exalted rank and His marvelous victory over sin and the grave. Why should He care to be remembered by His earthly disciples?

The reasons are not far to seek. "Having loved His disciples, He loved them to the end." He was about to leave them in His visible presence. The very love He bears to them would prompt the desire to be loved in return, and hence to

be remembered. Many men, on being exalted to a higher station in life, seem to forget or ignore the friends of their earlier years when they were poor and humble. This was not the case with Christ. He holds in affectionate remembrance His earthly disciples—not only those who knew Him in the flesh, but those who, having not seen Him, love Him nevertheless—and would be tenderly remembered by them. Love demands reciprocation. To remember Christ, and especially to remember Him in His great sacrifice of Himself for us, is the surest way to keep our hearts aflame with love for Him.

Again, He desires to be remembered by us because our salvation demands such remembrance. Paul says to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 15: 1, 2), “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, *if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you*, unless ye have believed in vain.” Paul preached the

very facts which this institution is designed to commemorate. We cannot approach this table intelligently without being reminded of the great gospel facts, and through them, having the living Christ brought before our minds more vividly. Memory is the purveyor of the mind and heart. They are affected by what it supplies to them and holds before them for their contemplation. The gospel must not only be *believed* in order to our salvation; it must be *remembered* also, as the perpetual means of our salvation.

Herein, then, may be seen the wisdom of the Lord's Supper as a memorial institution. It is the monument of the crucified but risen Christ. He erected no towering shaft of brass or marble to perpetuate his memory among men, but ordained these simple emblems whereby his friends and followers would remember Him in all future ages "until He come." Since its institution many monuments have crumbled to earth, and the names of heroes and mighty men have been

effaced from stone by the hand of Time. But each returning Lord's day witnesses Christ's monument fresh and new, and His name grows more resplendent with the passing centuries. He trusted His monument to the care and keeping of those who loved Him, and with loving hands they have spread the Lord's table through all the intervening centuries.

Remember Thee, Lord? Why should not we remember Thee above all earthly friends and benefactors? Thou hast endured the bitterness of death for our sakes, and by Thy stripes we are healed. For us Thou didst tread the wine-press of Thy afflictions alone. Yes, we will remember Thy agony in the garden, Thy mock trial, Thy crown of thorns, Thy cruel cross, Thy wounded hands and feet and side. O that the memory of all Thou hast done and suffered for us may fill us with contrition for our sins, and lead us to a more faithful discharge of all our religious obligations. And when Thou comest in Thy Kingdom of glory, O Lord, remember us!

XI.

EATING AND DRINKING UN- WORTHILY.

Wherefore whosoever shall eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.—1 *Cor.* 11: 27.

[T is not strange that many timid, fearful souls, deeply conscious of their faults and imperfections, should, in the presence of the above statement, hesitate to approach the Lord's table, fearing lest they be found "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." But it was against a very different class of persons that this language was used. The Lord's Supper had been greatly abused in the Church at Corinth. It had been regarded as an ordinary meal, and the people, some of them at least, ate to appease their hunger and drank to excess. In a word they had profaned a sacred ordinance, and had apparently lost sight of its deep spiritual significance. This would be the more

easily done by the Gentile converts, because of certain heathen feasts to which they were doubtless accustomed. It was in view of such abuses as these that the apostle utters the stern words of reproof found in this chapter.

It would be well for us all to inquire whether we may not be liable to fall into the same condemnation through an unworthy participation of the Lord's Supper. The essence of the sin in the Corinthian church was the failure to discern the spiritual import of the ordinance and to observe it in the proper spirit and for the proper purpose. It is evident that this same sin may be committed in another form. It is not probable, hardly possible, that the Lord's Supper could be abused in the same way now in any civilized land; but there are other forms of abuse which, in the sight of God, may be no less blameworthy than that for which the Corinthian church was rebuked. We mention a few of the abuses to which the Lord's Supper is subject in our own time.

1. It may be made a test of orthodoxy—or of right opinions. We may hedge it about with our denominational peculiarities and allow no brother to approach it who cannot pronounce our party shibboleth. Those who are thus kept away may love Christ as well or better than we, and may be making many more sacrifices for His sake than we are making; but because of some mistaken opinion which we regard them as holding, we assume the responsibility of debarring them from this memorial feast. In so doing we would be making it a denominational ordinance, a party badge, a division-wall between God's people. Thus what Christ intended to be a means of union is made the cause of alienations and divisions. It is clear that if we undertake to decide who may and who may not partake of the Lord's Supper, many of the purest saints on earth would be excluded, and many whose hearts are not right in the sight of God would be admitted, for none but God may read the hearts of men.

2. It may be approached with a mind

and heart full of worldly thoughts, and with a spirit foreign to the Lord's table. Is it not often the case that we go to this sacred institution without any preparation of heart and soul for its profitable observance? In the hurry of preparing the body with suitable raiment, we neglect too often to prepare the mind and heart, and go into the presence of the sacred emblems without a distinct effort to fix our thoughts on its serious import. Sometimes we have seen persons partake of the bread and wine in a thoughtless manner, apparently not seeming to discern the Lord's body and blood, but only the material elements. No doubt many Christians frequently err by having their minds pre-occupied with business cares or other unspiritual matters. To partake of the emblems without a serious thought of their significance, or the obligations which such a privilege implies, or a single emotion caused by the sufferings of Christ in our behalf—what is that but to partake unworthily, and thus to become

“guilty of the body and blood of the Lord?”

3. Again we may abuse the Lord's Supper, by coming to it with enmity in our hearts towards our brethren, and with an unlovely, unforgiving spirit. We fear this is often done. In spite of the petition in the prayer Christ taught His disciples to pray—“Forgive our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us”—and His distinct instruction that reconciliation with an offended or an offending brother should precede even an act of public worship—the offering of a gift at the altar—many Christians neglect to seek such reconciliation, and continue to cherish hatred and enmity in their hearts even when they come into the very shadow of the cross. This is certainly not partaking of the supper worthily. He who discerns the Lord's body and blood in the sacred emblems cannot partake of them hating a brother for whom Christ died.

There may be other forms of abuse, but if we keep ourselves free from those

mentioned we shall not be likely to receive the terrible verdict—"guilty of the body and blood of the Lord." A consciousness of our faults and weaknesses, so far from being a disqualification for coming to the Lord's table, is a preparation for so doing. But along with the consciousness of our sins, there should be unfeigned repentance therefor, and the sincere purpose, with God's help, to depart from all iniquity and to live a pure and spotless life.

The worthiness, O Lord, is Thine, not ours. Thou art the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world for our sins—the innocent victim of our transgressions. It is among the greatest of Thy mercies that Thou dost permit us to come to this sweet memorial service, and declare our love for Thee and our continued purpose to serve Thee, by partaking of this bread and this cup. May we henceforth live more worthily because of this exalted privilege!

XII.

SELF-EXAMINATION.

But let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.—1 Cor. 11: 28.

THE self-testing required by this passage as a condition of eating of the bread and drinking of the cup, acceptably, is set in contrast or antithesis with eating and drinking unworthily without discerning the Lord's body and blood. There are two discernings necessary to the proper observance of the Lord's Supper: (1) The discernment of ourselves, the inner man, by close self-scrutiny, and (2) the discernment of the spiritual significance of the emblems, and the first is in order to the second. The word *dokimazeto*, translated *examine* in the King James Version, and *prove* in the Revised Version, as quoted above, suggests a metaphor from metal-testing. The sentence

is paraphrased in the Bible Commentary thus: "Let a man prove himself, sifting what is refuse from what is sterling, the carnal from the spiritual."

It is much more natural for us to examine other people than it is to examine ourselves. Even in connection with this sacred institution, many people are much more concerned about the fitness of their neighbors to commune, than about their own fitness. This is strange in view of the fact that we are commanded to examine ourselves, and of the additional fact that we are much more capable of testing ourselves than we are of testing others. Every man knows his own innermost thoughts, motives and desires better than he knows those of others. He can look into his own soul, and ascertain what are its real feelings and purposes concerning Christ and the Christian life, and whether he is prompted by love for the Savior to come to the Lord's table, or by some less worthy motive. He can note the tendencies of his life; whether they are Christward or worldward, and if the latter,

whether there be true contrition and repentance for his past delinquencies. We can do this for ourselves; we cannot do it for others. We must judge others by external acts, largely, and these are not always a true index of the heart. "Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart." This is a fundamental difference in the human and divine methods of judgment. In our acknowledgment of Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we have accepted God's way of judging men, and are expected to submit our own hearts to the most honest and fearless self-examination.

In seeking for the reason of man's unwillingness to scrutinize his inner life, we will be helped by remembering the proneness of some men to hide from themselves the true condition of their business or estate, lest it be such as to trouble their minds; and the disposition of others not to look closely into the nature of their physical ailments, lest they prove to be of so serious a nature as to destroy

hope of recovery. No one, of course, would defend the wisdom of such a course. It is weakness and cowardice that prompt it. Is it not the consciousness that, deep down in our hearts, there are motives and desires which our own consciences could not approve, that makes us loth to tear away the thin disguises which we have thrown over these moral weaknesses and subject them to an honest self-examination in the light of the Cross? But this is moral cowardice. It is worse even than that; it is treachery to our own souls, and unfaithfulness to our own highest interests.

We are summoned, beloved, by this passage to a heroic task. We are asked to turn the eyes of our understanding inward and scan the inner shrine of our spirits, and *prove* them, *test* them. This is to be done in the presence of these emblems, because only in the light of the Cross of Christ can we estimate properly the true character of sin. Looking now into our own hearts deeper than any outward eye has ever penetrated, what do

we see? Do we see a divided heart seeking to hold in some sort of reconciliation love for Christ and love for the world's sinful pleasures and indulgences? Do we detect a secret purpose to serve God on Sunday and Mammon during the other six days of the week? Do we discover in the search-light of the Cross an unwillingness to permit Christ to come into our heart, occupy its throne, banish from it everything therein that is contrary to His will, and rule our lives? Can we detect a note of insincerity in our religious profession in which, while professing supreme allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ, we have made a mental reservation that this is not to be so construed as to interfere seriously with our business methods, our social pleasures and our lives of selfish ease?

O my brethren, let us at least be honest with God and with our own souls! If we do not mean to be Christians in reality as well as in name, let us at least cease to make any such profession. But we are persuaded that this self-testing which the

apostle enjoins will reveal to many a fixed and unshaken purpose to live for Christ, down beneath all foibles and weaknesses. With the consciousness of our numerous shortcomings there is also the consciousness that we would not exchange our hope in Christ for all the world. These discriminate between the carnal desires which they are honestly seeking to crucify, and the longings of the spirit for God and His righteousness, and this spiritual discernment enables them to wage a more successful warfare against the evil that is within them and the perils that are without. May the result of such honest self-proving as is here required of us be to fill us with greater humility, and draw us perceptibly closer to Him whose death for us we do show forth in this holy communion!

XIII.

A MEMORY AND A HOPE.

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come.—1 *Cor.* 11: 26.

THIS passage sets forth the two aspects of the Lord's Supper: it is a proclamation of Christ's death, recalling that tragic scene to our memory, and it is a promise of his second coming, strengthening our hope in that crowning event. The institution, therefore, combines in itself memory and hope. Remembering the fact of Christ's death for our sins, how natural it is for Memory to sweep back across the brief span of our lives and recall our wanderings and God's mercies. For while God has graciously promised to remember our sins against us no more forever, how can we help remembering them as forgiven and cleansed by the blood of the Lamb, as we come to the table of the Lord? These speaking

emblems make proclamation of Christ's death, and we can but ask ourselves, "For what did He die?" The answer comes, "For sins not His own—but ours." And then some of the most offensive of these sins rise before us at the call of Memory.

We can but remember our transgressions in connection with Christ's death, for He died for our sins. And it is well to do so. It will tend to humble us, and make us mindful of our weakness. It will tend, too, to deepen our sense of gratitude to "Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood." How mean and dispicable these sins appear in the light of the cross! How terrible in their nature and consequences they must have been to have necessitated the death of the innocent Son of God! Having been redeemed from sin by such a sacrifice, what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy living! Such reflections as these awakened by memory, are most salutary to the soul. They intensify our love to Christ, and

strengthen all our desires and purposes to live true and noble lives.

How close Memory and Hope are linked together! How readily the mind turns from the events of the past to survey the future! But the great event of the future that rises before our vision, as we come to this memorial supper, is the second advent of our Lord to this earth. How long must Christ's followers continue to eat of this bread and drink of this cup? "Till he come!" That event marks the limit of the use of these symbols. After that we shall not need this ordinance to keep fresh in our own minds and in the minds of the world, the fact of Christ's death for us and his love for men. He will come in the glory of His power. The mountains shall bow before Him, the little hills shall rejoice and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands for joy. "Till He come!" The words indicate perfect certainty in the Apostle's mind that Christ is coming to the earth again, "in like manner" as the disciples "beheld him going into heav-

en.” This was the faith of the Apostolic Church, and it is the faith of true believers to-day.

When will He come? We do not know. The angels do not know. Even Christ did not know when He was here on earth. It is in the hands of the Father. But He is coming, and it will be “in the fulness of time,” just as His first coming was. The world at large will not be expecting it. Men will be projecting their business plans far into the future, and their minds will be full of the petty little honors, rewards and pleasures of the world. Then “as the lightning cometh forth from the east and is seen even unto the west, so shall be the coming of the Son of Man.” How long, O Lord, are Thy faithful, waiting and watching servants to witness the dishonor and contempt heaped upon Thy church by unbelieving scoffers? The Apostle’s answer is, “Till He come?” How long before we shall see the King in His beauty? “Till He come!”

Have we considered well what mighty

changes on this earth will follow Christ's second coming? He will not come the second time in weakness and poverty, but in the greatness and majesty of His divine glory and with a vast retinue of angels. The world shall know of His arrival, for "all nations shall be gathered before Him," and the great work of separation between the righteous and the unrighteous shall begin. He came as a Savior before. He comes the second time as Judge. The righteous dead will be raised, the righteous living changed, and "together with them be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so shall we ever be with the Lord" (1 Thess. 4: 17). Glorious promise! How it cheers the heart to know that Christ is coming back to the scene of His struggles, temptations, sorrows, agony and death, as a triumphant Conqueror! Coming back to establish His throne on earth and to reign over it! Coming back to glorify His own, to heal all their sorrows and to dry all their tears! Coming to put down all opposition and wickedness and

rebellion, and establish righteousness throughout the whole earth! Coming to purify this old sin-cursed world and to "make all things new." No wonder the seer of Patmos, looking forward upon all these marvelous changes, exclaimed, "Come, Lord Jesus!" Let us rise from this memorial service to-day resolved, more than ever, to be ready ourselves for Christ's coming, and to seek to make the world ready. Let us determine to labor and pray and suffer for the world's salvation "till he come."

XIV.

THE SINLESS SUFFERING FOR THE GUILTY.

Him who knew no sin he made *to be* sin in our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him.—
2 Cor. 5: 21.

THIS remarkable passage expresses the motive by which the Apostles, as ambassadors on behalf of Christ, urged men to be reconciled to God. Higher motive does not lie within the range of human conception than that God, in order to our reconciliation and righteousness, should permit His sinless Son to bear the sins of the whole world and suffer as if Himself were guilty. The man who rejects the doctrine of the vicarious suffering of Christ, must reject this passage along with many others.* An

* We do not use the term "vicarious" to mean that Christ suffered the punishment due to our sins, so that we are thereby freed from such punishment, but in the sense that his suffering was in our behalf, that we might be made righteous and therefore free from the condemnation of sin.

ethical difficulty has been raised by some as to the righteousness or justice of God in permitting the innocent to suffer for the guilty. But this difficulty arises out of the failure to recognize the voluntariness of Christ's suffering. Surely we cannot deny to Christ the right to go beyond the requirements of justice, and to give such an expression of His love for man and of His subjection to His Father's will, as would result in bringing sinful men into a state of righteousness. Even parental love in human hearts does not stop to ask what law or justice requires it to do to rescue erring and imperiled children, but only what it *can* do to save the objects of its love. How much more would God "so love the world as to give His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him might not perish, but have everlasting life!"

Whatever may be the unfathomable depths and unattainable heights of this profound and lofty theme, there are some truths that stand out in bold relief, in connection with it, which we can perceive

and whose preciousness we can in some degree appreciate.

1. *The sinlessness of Christ*, who suffered the agonies of Gethsemane and the cross. He knew no sin, though living in a sinful world, possessing a human nature, and feeling the waves of temptation beat against Him constantly. He yielded not to its solicitations, but preserved, unsullied, his spotless purity through all the trying experiences of His earthly life. Let the vast significance of this fact be pondered well by us. Wherefore this unique experience, this solitary exception to the unnumbered millions of our race who have lived in the world?

2. *This sinless One was a Supreme Sufferer*. He was pre-eminently "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." With a soul keenly sensitive to sin and to all forms of suffering in those about Him, what must have been the pain He daily endured as He came in contact with loathsome disease, with poverty and want, with death and its bereavements, and with hypocrisy, selfishness and avarice! But a

deeper shadow came upon Him in the Garden, culminating in the indescribable darkness and anguish of Calvary. No such cup of sorrow was ever before or since pressed to human lips. It is not in the power of finite minds to conceive of all the horror and soul-agony which Christ endured in that awful and mysterious struggle with the powers of darkness, when he was "made sin for us." It is a false theory of the divine government, therefore, that makes suffering a sign of the divine displeasure. Some of the greatest saints have been the greatest sufferers in all ages. It is often the case, too, that they suffer for righteousness' sake, and for the welfare of others. Out of the school of adversity have graduated some of the noblest characters which have honored the race.

3. *His suffering was in our behalf.* This, the unthinking multitude who witnessed Christ's suffering, did not know. They associated His crucifixion with the idea of His own guilt. "We did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God and

afflicted," says Isaiah. "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was laid upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed." This suffering in our behalf was voluntary. It was prompted by love. He "loved us and gave Himself for us!" Was ever gift like that? Did ever love before or since give such evidence of its genuineness and strength? Not that we loved Him, but that He loved us. This it is that makes His suffering vicarious, that He laid down His life in our behalf.

4. *The end sought in this voluntary suffering for us, was that we might become the righteousness of God in Christ.* The cross, then, has a deep ethical intent. Its purpose was to effect our righteousness. That involves the transformation of our character. How the cross can effect this change we need not attempt here to explain. We know it does it, however, as attested by nearly nineteen centuries of Christian history. The heart can explain the fact better than the head. It is

divine love, evoking love in human hearts by its sacrifices, and through love transforming the life. What we specially desire to emphasize, however, in this place, is that the very end toward which Christ's sacrifice for us looks, is our becoming the righteousness of God in Him. We beseech you, brethren, who come to this holy feast, that ye "receive not the grace of God in vain," but let us "cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." If we have hitherto been content with our faults, and have made a truce with habits and aims of life which mark a low grade of Christian character, let the tender appeal which this institution makes for purity and righteousness, rebuke our low aims and our unholy compromises, and stir us up to more heroic efforts to realize that ideal righteousness of character which was the end of all Christ's sufferings in our behalf.

XV.

THE FELLOWSHIP OF CHRIST'S SUFFERING.

That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death; if by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead.—*Phil.* 3: 10.

TO KNOW God, as He is revealed in Jesus Christ whom He hath sent, is life eternal. To know Christ is to know God, for no man cometh to the Father but by Him. But to know Christ fully we must know Him in the two aspects in which He has manifested Himself unto us, namely, in His humiliation and in His exaltation. The above is the historic order in which He has manifested Himself to men, but the order observed in the text is perhaps the order in which we know Him. That is to say, we bow to His authority as King, in His exalted resurrection state, and know something of

the power of His resurrection, before we enter fully into the fellowship of His sufferings, which implies a maturer development of spiritual life. The first is "the quickening virtue of His resurrection," the second is "assimilation to Him by partaking of His sufferings."

It is safe to assume that we who have come to this table of the Lord, as communicants, know something of the quickening power of Christ's resurrection from the dead. It is through the belief of that fact, and all that it implies, that life has taken on new meaning to us, and our supreme obligations to Christ have been realized in some measure by us. We have looked through the open sepulcher and caught a glimpse of the immortal radiance reflected from the life beyond. This vision of the eternal world has brought new hope and fresh inspiration to our lives. This new life and new joy which have come into our souls we feel sure have come from the risen Christ, who died for our sins and rose again for our justification. Hence, to some extent

at least, we know "the power of His resurrection"—a power to remove the sting of death and fortify us against all the ills of this present life. That we shall yet know Christ in "the power of His resurrection," in a much larger sense, is undoubtedly true; but we have already had a foretaste of that power as an earnest of the yet richer and fuller revelation which is to come.

How much have we learned of "the fellowship of Christ's sufferings?" That we realize that it is through the suffering of Christ that we have been brought into a state of reconciliation with God, is no doubt true. But this we may do without knowing what it is to "suffer with Christ," and to share with Him the burden He bore for the world's redemption. Nevertheless we do not fully know Christ until we do enter into the fellowship of His sufferings. Since to know God in Christ is life eternal, it follows that there is a fullness of life denied to all those who have not entered into the fellowship of His sufferings. We can know men

but partially in prosperity, and in positions of honor and power. When we have walked with them in the valley of humiliation and adversity, where great billows of sorrow have broken over them, and have shared with them their burdens and griefs, we feel that we know them as never before, and are bound to them by ties of love and sympathy which would otherwise have been impossible. Nothing unites men so closely as suffering together. Why should not this principle hold good in reference to Christ?

What is it, then, to know the fellowship of Christ's suffering? It is certain that we are not to understand a mere theoretical or abstract knowledge of such sufferings, such as we might learn by reading or hearing about them. The word "fellowship" carries with it a deeper meaning than this. It implies a *partnership* with Christ in His sufferings—an experimental knowledge of these sufferings by a personal participation. One may inquire, in the literalistic spirit of Nicodemus, "Is it possible for one

now to be nailed to the cross with Christ, and feel the pain which shook His mortal frame as the cruel nails pierced his hands and feet, and His quivering flesh was rent by His weight on the uplifted cross?" Literally, of course not; metaphorically, or figuratively, he can. "How can these things be?" He who feels in his soul, in some measure, the love for humanity which Christ felt and feels yet, and who, realizing to some extent, as He realized, the awful consequences of sin, yearns for the salvation of men, and to accomplish that end is willing to endure hardships, privations, obloquy and become "of no reputation," that he may bring men to the knowledge of God, he knows the fellowship of Christ's suffering. He understands Gethsemane's awful struggle as no mere theologian ever can understand it. Every true disciple that follows in Christ's footsteps has his own Gethsemanes and Calvarys. He, too, has staggered under the burden of some cross borne for Christ, and for the world's redemption. Such an one knows Christ

in a deeper and higher sense than any nominal disciple, who turns back from any losses, burdens, persecutions and trials, can know Him. He knows Him in the tenderness of His love and in the depth of His solicitude for the salvation of the lost.

O what ties bind such disciples to their Lord! They, too, have tasted the cup of bitterness, and have shared with Christ in bearing the world's scorn and contempt. They are one with Him in bonds of everlasting sympathy and love. What He suffered for, they suffer for. What He died for, they are willing to die for, if need be. They do not esteem their lives dear, if called upon to lay them down for Christ's sake and the gospel's.

This is what the Lord's Supper is saying to us to-day, beloved. It is an appeal to us to follow Christ in His lowly sufferings here if we would reign with Him hereafter. Are we ready to-day to know Christ in the fellowship of His sufferings, as well as in the power of His resurrection? Let us so eat of this bread and drink of this cup.

XVI.

THE NEW COMMANDMENT; OR, THE MEASURE OF CHRISTIAN LOVE.

A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.—*John 13: 34.*

THE death of Christ introduced not only a new conception of sin, a new type of righteousness and a new standard of judgment, but it also furnishes us a new measure of love. To love thy neighbor as thyself was a requirement of the law which Christ regarded as only second in importance, and of the same nature as the commandment to love God with all one's mind, heart and strength. But in the passage above quoted Jesus seems to require among His disciples a new measure of love, even that which He was to exemplify in His death for them. It is altogether proper, therefore, that we associate this ordinance, commemorative

of Christ's death, with this new commandment to love one another as He loved us. Not only was Christ's death a manifestation of His love in our behalf, but this observance is intended, no doubt, to foster brotherly love among Christ's disciples. When it is observed in the spirit in which the early disciples observed it and for the purpose for which it was instituted, it can hardly fail to intensify our love for Christ and for one another. Reduced to a matter of mere ceremony, and surrounded with pompous ritual, it fails to accomplish this end, and hence before the Lutheran Reformation its original meaning had been largely lost sight of. In D'Aubigne's "History of the Reformation" he gives an interesting account of the readjustment of the Lord's Supper after the Romish mass had been abandoned. It occurred at Zurich, Switzerland. The account says:

"On the eleventh of April, 1525, three pastors of Zurich presented themselves, with Megander and Oswald Myconius, before the great council and petitioned for

the re-establishment of the Lord's Supper. Their speech was grave; all minds were solemnized; every one felt the importance of the resolution which the council was called upon to take. The Mass, that mystery, which, for more than three centuries, was the soul of the religious service of the Latin Church, behoved to be abolished; the corporal presence of Christ behoved to be declared an illusion, and the illusion itself to be made palpable to the people. To resolve on this required courage, and there were men in the council who shuddered at the very idea of it."

After full discussion, however, the important step was decided on, and the observance and its result are thus described:

"Altars had disappeared; and their places were supplied by single tables, on which stood the wine and bread of the Eucharist, while the attentive congregation thronged around. There was something solemn in the numbers. . . . The deacons read the passages of Scripture which referred to the sacrament, the

pastors addressed an earnest exhortation to the flock, urging all those who, by continuing in sin, would defile the body of the Lord Jesus, to abstain from this sacred supper. The people knelt; the bread was handed around on large platters or wooden plates, and each person broke a portion; the wine was dispensed in wooden cups—this being thought to approach nearest to the first institution. Surprise and joy filled all hearts. This reformation was effected in Zurich. The simple celebration of the Lord's death seemed to have again infused into the Church the love of God, and of the brethren. The words of Jesus Christ were again spirit and life. While the different orders and different parties of the Church of Rome had never ceased to dispute with each other, the first effect of the gospel, on again entering the Church, was to establish charity among the brethren. The love of primitive ages was restored to Christendom. Enemies were seen renouncing old and inveterate hatred, and embracing each other after

having eaten together of the bread of the Eucharist. Zwingle, delighted at this touching manifestation, thanked God that the Lord's Supper was again performing those miracles of love which the sacrifice of the Mass had long ceased to produce." (Pages 336 and 337.)

We quote this to show that it is not only the purpose but the legitimate effect of the Lord's Supper, properly observed, to kindle the flame of brotherly love in hearts where it had ceased to glow. The reason of this is not far to seek. The Lord's Supper is the memorial of Christ's death—a supreme manifestation of love for all men. Christ then loved not only us, but those whom we have felt at liberty not to love. But should we not love those whom Christ loved? If He gave Himself for His enemies, why should not *we* also love even those who have mistreated us? Such must be the process of reasoning that must go on in a thoughtful mind in the presence of these sacred emblems.

But it is the measure of the love re-

quired by this new commandment that constitutes its unique feature. We should love each other as Christ loved us. He loved us well enough to die for us. "We ought, also," says John, "to lay down our lives for the brethren." That is, we are to hold ourselves in such an attitude of loving friendship to our brethren as that we are willing to serve them in any emergency, even to the extent of dying for them. But the laying down of our lives for our brethren does not necessarily mean that we are to die for them. This is rarely, if ever, now required of us. The principle, however, remains, and this principle is that all our resources of mind, body, and earthly position are held subject to the needs and necessities of the brethren. If they are not so held, we are not fulfilling the law of Christ as expressed in His own life and in this new commandment.

There can be no doubt that one of the prominent characteristics of the early Church was the love which its members had one for another. This bond of affili-

ation was something stronger than the world had ever seen before, and it marveled at it. "Behold, how they love one another!" was the natural expression of their surprise at this new phenomenon. Nor is it less certain that this feature of Christianity in the days of its purity did much to commend it to the unbelieving world, and to convince its enemies that it had a power superior to that of other religions. It was intended by the Founder of Christianity that this should be so. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples," said Jesus. Brotherly love, then, was the primitive badge worn by the early Christians which marked them as disciples of Christ. Its restoration in our day in all its primitive force, even to the breaking down of sectarian barriers, and the abolition of party names and distinctions, would do more to convert the world and usher in the millennial reign than the restoration of the miracle-working power of the early Church.

If it be, then, the effect of the scriptural observance of this institution to

foster brotherly love, and thus restore unity in the Church, we have in this fact a strong argument for its perpetuity, and for its observance as often, at least, as every first day of the week. If at any time we leave this table, with an unforgiving spirit, cherishing hatred or malice in our hearts toward any one, and especially toward brethren, we may rest assured that we have missed the significance of this solemn feast, and that our observance has been purely formal and unscriptural. Love for Christ and love for His disciples are so intimately blended and interwoven with each other, that we cannot cherish the one without cherishing the other. At the Cross of Christ, at last, the warring factions of the Church will lay down their weapons of strife, and unfurl the white banner of peace, and thence move forward unitedly to the rescue of a perishing world.

XVII.

LOSING AND SAVING LIFE.

And He said unto all, If any man would come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whosoever would save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it.—*Luke 9: 23, 24.*

JESUS having elicited from His disciples their confession of Him as the Christ of God, had announced to them the fact of His rejection by the authorities of the Jewish nation, and His crucifixion and resurrection from the dead. The thought of His repudiation by the Jewish people, and of His humiliation by crucifixion, was so utterly repugnant to all the plans and hopes of the disciples that Peter even ventured to rebuke Him for what evidently seemed to him a rash and impolitic statement. It was this action of Peter, sympathized with, no doubt, by the other disciples, which brought forth

the words from the Savior which are quoted above. He means to say to them, "Not only is it true that I am to be crucified and to lay down my life for the welfare of man, but in so doing I am only representing the general law of life. Whoever would be my disciple must bear his cross, not as a rare exhibition of faith and heroism at long intervals, but as a daily course of life." The principle which underlies this cross-bearing, as a condition of discipleship, is, that he who lays down his earthly life in the interest of righteousness and for the welfare of his fellowmen, shall save it in the higher and nobler sense; while he who, turning aside from the path of danger and of sacrifice, saves the lower material life, thereby forfeits his life eternal.

This sets the Cross of Christ before us in a new light. It is infinitely more than a symbol of suffering. It is the embodiment and illustration of one of the profoundest principles of human life. The words are incapable of being understood, as are many other words of Jesus, unless

we bear in mind the trivial estimate He puts upon mere physical life as contrasted with the life of the soul. To one whose vision takes in the eternity of the soul's life, the temporary life of the flesh is a very small thing in comparison. What matters it if we are permitted to live to the full limit of human life, with every earthly desire and ambition gratified, and our lower nature pampered and nourished, if the higher ranges of our being, which ally us to God, are neglected, starved and atrophied? This was the false conception of life which Jesus saw in the world. He observed that men were living for the present and not for the future. He saw that they were anxious about the body—what it should eat, what it should drink, and where-withal it should be clothed; but that they had little thought of the immortal nature—its food and drink and its investiture. What the world needed, then, was a striking illustration of the true life which, repudiating all sordid aims and ambitions, and all selfish motives, should be

surrendered to the loftiest ideals, scorning danger and even death that it might attain unto the fullness of perfected being. Such, at least, is one lesson taught us by the Cross of Christ.

Beloved, as oft as we eat of this bread and drink of this cup, this high ideal of life should be lifted before us. We should recognize in these speaking symbols the expression of the great truth that he only lives truly who lives a life of self-denial, and self-crucifixion. Christ lives to-day in the hearts of millions of believers because he dared to lay down his life for others. Had He accepted the proposition of his tempter, and by the sacrifice of right and truth become the Ruler of the world by a short and easy path, and lived a life of selfish and luxurious ease, ruling men by force, and exacting from them their service as His due, He would no doubt have been honored in that generation; but His name long since would have lost its potent spell, and He would not now be ruling over a vast spiritual empire. . Because He emp-

tied Himself and took upon Him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross, God hath highly exalted Him and given Him a name that is above every name.

This principle, which is so conspicuously illustrated in the life of Christ, is seen manifesting itself in a less degree through all the pages of human history. The men and women who, despising the world's honors and selfish indulgences, have given themselves for the benefit of the race, and have sought to alleviate human suffering and sorrow, and to make the hard conditions of life more tolerable—these are they who live to-day in the memory and in the affections of mankind. Their names are not forgotten. We linger lovingly over the pages of history that record their unselfish deeds. We make pilgrimages to their graves, and stand, uncovered, over the mounds where their ashes sleep. Paul and Nero have both transmitted their names to posterity. The one lives in the affectionate regard of men and is a perpetual

inspiration to all high and worthy Christian effort. The other is a synonym for tyranny, heartless cruelty, and selfish luxury. One laid down his life, like his Master, on the altar of Christian service, and has found the life eternal. The other lived in the flesh and for the gratification of his animal nature, and lives only in the execration of mankind. The visitor to Westminster Abbey may pass by, unmoved, the tablets bearing the names of England's great military chieftains and statesmen, but he will be apt to pause over the marble slab inscribed with the name of David Livingstone, who laid down his life in the midst of the Dark Continent for the redemption of Africa. Evermore history is teaching us that the path of glory is the path of self-denial. This is the philosophy of the Cross, set over against the false philosophy of the world.

We have not lingered in vain around the table of the Lord, if we carry hence with us, in living power, the truth which the Master so beautifully taught and so

wondrously exemplified, that the offering up of our lives, in acts of daily self-denial, for the world's betterment, is the true secret of gaining the life eternal; so that, in the future, others may take note of us, that we have been with Jesus, and have adopted His great principle of life. Following thus in His lowly footsteps here, we shall reign with Him hereafter, and share in His glory there as we have shared in His humiliation here. The life of the soul is fellowship with God. Whatever helps us to that goal of our being, even though it be the laying down of our earthly lives, ought not to be counted loss, but gain.

XVIII.

THE BAPTISM OF SUFFERING.

But I have a baptism to be baptized with: and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!—*Luke 12: 50.*

THIS, with other kindred passages, shows that Jesus carried about with Him the shadow of the coming eclipse of sorrow. He was not unaware of the doom that awaited Him. In our last study we had a prediction of His crucifixion. In this we are to study the significance of His use of the term “baptism,” in connection with His suffering. Other words could have expressed the mere fact of His coming struggle and death. There must have been some special fitness in this term which led to its selection by Jesus in this connection. In the first place, the form or outward act of baptism, would fitly represent the overwhelming sorrow and

anguish which were to sweep over and submerge His soul. Those who have known something of the depths of human sorrow, and who have felt like crying out with the psalmist, "All thy waves have gone over me," will be best enabled to understand the meaning of Christ's expression. The impropriety of using such a word to express some trifling or ordinary trouble or affliction is obvious to all. It carries with it an intensity of meaning not applicable to the ordinary ills of life. But when the human spirit is overwhelmed with anguish and suffering, and all its powers are overshadowed with a supreme sorrow, then the word fitly describes the experience. When we remember the mysterious anguish which our Lord underwent in the garden, and the tragic scenes of the Cross, when on Him the world's sin and sorrow were rolled, we feel the fitness and force of the term to describe what He experienced.

The same reason, no doubt, underlies the figurative use of baptism in connection with the Holy Spirit. Both at Pen-

tecost, at the opening of the Christian dispensation, and at Cæsarea, when the door of faith was opened to the Gentiles, the disciples are said to have been baptized in the Holy Spirit. The fact that the baptism in the Spirit is not mentioned elsewhere than in connection with these two historic occasions, and that in each of these there were extraordinary manifestations of divine power, such as speaking with tongues, has led many devout students of the Bible to limit the application of this phrase to these two occasions. They do not, of course, deny that Christians now receive the Holy Spirit, but they think they do not receive Him in such measure as to warrant the use of this strong term. This, it must be confessed, as a matter of fact, is too true of most professed Christians; whether it is *necessarily* so, and whether it *is* so in the case of all Christians since the close of the apostolic age, is another question. It is unquestionably true, however, that the Apostles and some others of the early Christians received the Holy Spirit in

such measure, as that it could be said of them that they "spake as the Spirit gave them utterance," and their words are called the words of the Spirit. It is probable that this complete control of mental and spiritual powers by the Holy Spirit in the Apostolic age, for the special needs of that age, is what is termed baptism in the Holy Spirit. It is not logical to assume, however, that baptism in the Holy Spirit must always be accompanied with the same phenomena that attended it in the Apostolic age. If, in any age, the human spirit be submerged in, and come under the complete control of the Holy Spirit, we suppose it could properly be said that such person had received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Our only point here is that the term baptism, in its figurative use, whether it be a baptism of Spirit or of suffering, carries with it an extraordinary measure of influence.

But the fact that baptism in water had been selected as the act of initiation into the kingdom of God as a visible, organ-

ized institution, and as a fit symbol of the soul's dedication to God's service, made it a fit word for Christ to use, in its figurative sense, setting forth His overwhelming sorrow, in devoting Himself to the accomplishment of His Father's will. He Himself had submitted to baptism at the hands of John, His forerunner, and in the utter consecration of His life to His high mission He was illustrating to all the coming ages the significance of that solemn act. The very perfection of His obedience to His Father's will involved the baptism of suffering to which He refers. When has it ever been different in any age of the world? He who would wear a crown must bear the cross.

How little did the disciples of Jesus understand this law of promotion! Two of the most prominent of them went to the Master with the request that they be given the places of honor in His kingdom—the one to sit on His right hand and the other on His left. To this thoughtless request Jesus replied: “Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink

the cup that I am about to drink?" To this they replied, "We are able." Jesus then said, "My cup indeed ye shall drink; but to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give, but it is for them for whom it hath been prepared of my Father." Little did these disciples know that in the kingdom of Christ eminence comes to those who humble themselves most and are able to drink the cup that He drank, and to be baptized with the baptism He was soon to be baptized with. Unfortunately this rebuke to the ambitious sons of Zebedee has not prevented the vain desire for high places in the kingdom of God since their day. There are still those who think to attain positions of influence and power by favoritism or "good luck," rather than by patient toil and suffering.

Let those who are ambitious to occupy a high place in Christ's kingdom answer this question: "Are ye able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" If your faith and courage are not of the kind to endure hardships, privations, suffering

and death for the gospel's sake, pray ye rather for some humble place where you may cultivate these graces. Let these emblems remind us that our Lord and Master submitted to a baptism of sorrow and suffering, and that, if we should be called on to follow in His footsteps, the disciple is not better than His Master.

XIX.

THE LONE SUFFERER.

I have trodden the wine press alone; and of the peoples there was no man with me. —*Isa.* 63: 3.

THERE was a uniqueness about Jesus which set Him apart from all other men, and made Him, in a sense, alone, even when He was in the midst of the busy throng. Loneliness is not confined to the desert, far from the habitations of men. One may be alone in the midst of the surging crowd. Perhaps the loneliest feelings that any of us have ever experienced have been in the midst of a strange city, where thousands of human beings swept to and fro about us; their faces were strange to us, as also their names, occupations and characters. We were equally strange to them, and so for lack of knowledge and sympathy of each

other, there was this sense of loneliness. Consider, then, the senses in which Christ must have been alone in the world.

He was the only begotten of the Father. He stood in a unique relation to God. He alone of all the men in the world knew God. "No man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son shall reveal him." He had a unique mission in the world. He came from heaven charged with the divine mission of redeeming the race, by bringing men to the knowledge and service of God. He alone understood what that mission involved in the way of humiliation, and suffering, and death. He alone had any just conception of the spiritual nature of the kingdom He was to establish, and of the great principles which were to control the lives of its citizens. He alone, therefore, of all the sons of men was in sympathy and fellowship with God's thought and plan for redeeming the world. None knew sin as Jesus Christ knew it, although He Himself was sinless. His spiritual insight, His intimate knowledge of God,

His thorough knowledge of man's nature and possibilities, His clear grasp of truth and righteousness—all these gave Him a conception of sin and its awful consequences to the human soul which no one else had. His knowledge of human nature, in all its weakness and its environment, gave Him a sympathy for man which no one else possessed. In the lowest and most despised of human beings He saw possibilities of good, and sought to penetrate through the outward crust of sin and wretchedness to the better nature, and to rouse it from its dormant condition. No other man ever had such sympathy for human suffering and need as Jesus had. His soul was sensitive to every cry of human want, and His hand was outstretched to give relief to every form of human suffering. In all these respects, therefore, He was separate and apart from other men. Even His intimate disciples, who knew Him better than others, and who loved Him more, did not understand and could not enter into

sympathy with Him in the great mission which brought Him to the world.

As the on-coming shadows of His death grew darker, more and more did He seem to be alone. Even those who loved Him best could not walk with Him on the high plane of His great purposes and plans. And when, on that fatal night of His betrayal, the pent-up fury of His enemies was about to burst upon His devoted head, even His disciples forsook Him and fled in the darkness, and He was alone with His enemies. Before the Jewish Sanhedrim and at the bar of Pilate there seems to have been none to advocate His cause and to share in the insult and ignominy that were heaped upon Him. He was alone in Gethsemane's shadows, alone in His trial, alone He trod the *via dolorosa*, bearing His cross to Golgotha. He was alone in His agony and shame on the cross. None knew Him, none understood Him, none entered into full sympathy with His great mission.

A panegyrist of Napoleon said of him that he was "wrapped in the solitude of

his own originality." This, to an infinitely greater degree, was true of Christ; but He was wrapped, also, in the solitude of His great and beneficent plans for the world's redemption. This is a part of the penalty for goodness and greatness. No man ever set his mark high and sought diligently to rise to it, that did not meet with the opposition of those whose aims in life were lower and less worthy. Even success is an affront to those who fail. Genius is heresy to mediocrity. Goodness is a rebuke to impurity. It was Joseph's purity of character and loftiness of aim that made him offensive to his brethren, and caused him to be sold into bondage. Superior learning has always been offensive to ignorance and to a narrow provincialism. It is not surprising, therefore, that Christ, in the infinite sweep of His great plans, and of His broad sympathies, should be a continual offense to men of narrow minds and low, earthly plans and ambitions. They esteemed "Him stricken, smitten of God." They could not understand that He would

be willing to endure suffering and ignominy for the welfare of men. The very loftiness of Christ's aim, the purity of His life, the breadth and tenderness of His sympathy, were the chief causes of the opposition to Him and of the persecution that was heaped upon His head.

These facts may well remind us, especially in the presence of these symbols of Christ's body and blood, that in proportion as we follow Christ in singleness of aim, in purity of life, in unselfish efforts to benefit our race, in the courageous rebuke of hypocrisy and sin of every kind, we shall forfeit the friendship of the world, whose aims, instincts and sympathies are not those of Christ. We shall not be wholly alone, however, for there are others seeking to follow Christ, and fellowship with these shall be sweet and sacred. But we are not to think it a strange thing if the world turns away from us and refuses to sympathize with our principles and aims. Even Christ had to "tread the wine press alone." These prophetic words signify, too, that

Christ is to be alone in judgment, as well as in suffering. The Father hath committed all judgment to the Son. As He hath suffered for us, so will He judge us. Surely we could not wish a more merciful Judge than He will be. He himself hath worn our human nature and "hath been tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin." Beloved, let us depart from this table to-day, resolved to be true to Jesus Christ, our great Leader, no matter what earthly friendships we may forfeit for so doing, nor what earthly emoluments and honors we may be called upon to surrender; for the friendship of Jesus Christ, and the joy of hearing Him say to us in the last day, "Well done, good and faithful servant," will be worth infinitely more to us than all the wealth, honors, and pleasures of this fleeting world.

XX.

BLESSEDNESS OF BEARING RE- PROACHES FOR CHRIST.

Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the same manner did their fathers unto the prophets.—*Luke 6: 22, 23.*

THIS is one of the hard lessons taught by Jesus, and illustrated in His own life. No man can see at once that it is a blessed thing to be hated, separated from, reproached; and have his name cast out as evil by his fellow-men, even in a holy cause. It seems to us, for the time, very "grievous" that we should thus be persecuted for righteousness' sake, and we are often disposed to repine at our lot, and even murmur, sometimes, at the ways of Providence. These words of Jesus teach us a wiser philosophy of life. There is a

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blessedness which belongs to a true life lived under these adverse circumstances.

1. There is, first of all, a consciousness of the genuineness of our Christian faith and loyalty, which, under other conditions, cannot exist in so intense a degree. And there is a blessedness in this which few imagine. The man who has never had occasion to test his loyalty to Christ, by being called on to endure reproaches and persecutions for His name's sake, does not know whether his faith would be equal to such an emergency or not. We once knew a professed Christian whose faith and courage failed him when asked to carry to the church the emblems for use in the Lord's Supper, as it was an infidel town, and skeptics sneered at him on the way. Think you such a man can ever know the blessedness of one who bears, heroically, the reproaches and sneers of the enemies of Christ? Many of those who read this have had enough experience in bearing up under slander and misrepresentation while seeking to do their Christian duty,

to have had a sense of the new dignity that comes to the soul with the consciousness of being so related to Christ as to suffer the reproaches that were heaped upon Him. It was this feeling that made the early disciples rejoice "to be counted worthy" to suffer for Christ's sake. Nothing, we believe, would do so much to restore to the church of to-day the triumphant joy and tranquil peace of the early church, as the adoption of such an aggressive policy against sin and popular evils as would bring upon it the active opposition of all the enemies of Christ. It would soon become conscious of a divine mission, and recognize itself as the repository of a special trust. This persecution of the church for righteousness' sake would tend greatly to its purification. False professors would not care to be identified with an institution that was opposed and persecuted by the pleasure-loving and time-serving. It would for the same reason tend to individual purification, for the higher nature, once aroused to combat with the evil forces without,

would make war with the evil forces within and bring them into subjection.

It would be a great mistake to suppose because Christ's earthly life was so marked by the fierce opposition of evil forces, and by continual self-denial, that it was therefore an unhappy life. On the contrary there is evidence that he experienced a height and fullness of joy unknown to others. "These things have I spoken unto you," said Jesus, "that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be fulfilled." We are justified in inferring from this passage alone, that He felt Himself to be in conscious possession of a peculiar joy which He called "my joy," and which He was anxious that His disciples should share. What the nature of this joy was there is little room to doubt. It was the two-fold joy of fellowship with His Father, and the luxury of doing good to others, even to those who were persecuting Him. It was in the "joy set before Him" of anticipating the results of His sufferings for others, that He

found strength to endure the cross, despising the shame.

If, therefore, the opposition which we incur in being loyal to Christ is the very means of developing within us the highest type of earthly joy, we can understand Christ's words, quoted above, and the Lord's Supper has additional meaning to us. It is saying to us as often as we come to it, These are the memorials of a life whose blessedness consisted in the patient endurance of poverty, the scorn and hatred of wicked men, and persecution unto death, while He wrought for human good.

2. It is less difficult to understand that a part of the blessedness of enduring the things which Christ mentions is the development of a robust and courageous type of Christian character. Whoso, by the grace of God, is enabled to endure being hated, reviled and opposed, without murmuring or impatience, and who turns neither to the right nor to the left in the discharge of his obligations to God and to his fellow men because of any hard-

ship it may impose on him, has attained to a strength and courage in character which is the most valuable possession on earth, and which, in a large measure, lifts him above, and makes him independent of, outward circumstances.

The special reason assigned by Jesus why one should "rejoice and leap for joy" who is the object of hatred, ostracism and reproaches for the Son of Man's sake, is that "great is his reward in heaven." In proportion as we have been sorely tested here, and have, under God, been able to abide faithful, will our reward be great in heaven. That reward, however, will no doubt be based on the qualities of character which have been developed here under the disciplinary agencies of God's providence; but just what its nature will be we cannot know now. But it will be "great" and it will be enduring. Christ's words are a sufficient guarantee of that. That is enough. That fires the heart and the imagination. Under the inspiration of such a promise, renewed to us each time as we gather

about the table of the Lord, shall we not
acquit ourselves nobly in the battle-field
of life!

Jesus, I my cross have taken,
All to leave and follow Thee;
I am poor, despised, forsaken;
Thou, henceforth, my all shall be.

XXI.

THE MIND OF CHRIST.

Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who, being in the form of God, counted it not a prize to be on an equality with God, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto death, yea, the death of the cross.—*Phil.* 2: 5-8.

IN this profound passage the apostle is enforcing the duty of unselfishness and humility as the essential conditions of unity and peace among brethren. As was the custom among the apostles, the example of Christ is referred to as the highest exemplification of the graces which it was sought to inculcate. In one of his daring flights of inspiration, in which he identifies his theology with that of John, Paul here affirms, in boldest language, the pre-existence of Christ, and that, too, “in the form of God.” This

“form of God” we are to understand as meaning that which outwardly manifests the essence or nature of God; the essential attributes of the divine Being. But this subsistence in the form of God, Christ did not regard as a prize to be tenaciously grasped, but, on the contrary, He “emptied Himself,” and took upon Him “the form of a servant.” That is, this great pre-existent Being exchanged “the form of God” for “the form of a servant!” Was ever condescension like that? Was there ever humility so low, and self-abnegation so complete? Why should this great and infinite Being who dwelt in the bosom of the Father, and who possessed all the outward manifestations of divine glory, be willing to exchange all this “for the form of a servant” and be found in the likeness of men? There is but one conceivable answer to this question: He saw that God’s great purpose concerning humanity could be carried out only by his assumption of our human nature, with all the limitations and humiliations, and suffering, and

sorrow, which that involved. There was a great crisis in our world-history which demanded the incarnation. On the plane of manhood must be fought the battle that would determine the destiny of the human race.

Sublimar thought there is none conceivable to the human mind, than that of this Creator of worlds, the eternal Logos, who was in the beginning with the Father, stripping Himself of the divine glories and stooping down to the plane of our human nature, and not stopping, either, at the highest summits of human life, but descending to the lowest conditions of poverty and obscurity, in order that he might enter into sympathy with human needs and become the Savior of the world. This was the "mind of Christ"—that he was willing to exchange the glories of Godhood for the humility of a servant in order to rescue the perishing. To what extent, my brethren, is this "mind of Christ" in us? How much of dignity, of position, of wealth, of social standing, of ease, of worldly repu-

tation, have we been willing to lay aside that we might become the servants of men, and the Saviors of our brothers and sisters who are perishing?

Let us pause for a moment on the question, too high for us, perhaps, to ever fully solve, as to what was the nature of that self-emptying which Christ underwent in becoming flesh and dwelling among us. It must be obvious to every one who is capable of thinking upon the subject at all, that, in exchanging "the form of God" for "the form of a servant," Christ must needs have taken upon Him certain limitations. This was inevitable. If He was to be a man in reality and not in mere semblance, then he must needs be subject to the ordinary conditions and limitations of the flesh; that is to say, he must needs be hungry, weary, and be subjected to temptation, and trial, and pain, as all other men. This was necessary that he might enter into all the experiences of our human nature. Whatever of outward glory that corresponds to the divine attributes which

He enjoyed in common with the Father before the world was, was laid aside in this condescension. That there was even a certain limitation of His omniscience involved in this voluntary condescension is implied by his own words. To what extent this applies we do not know. It is safe to affirm, however, that it in no sense disqualified Him for the great office of Messiah—the world's Prophet, Priest and King. He came to execute this high office for humanity, and to this end He received the Spirit of God without measure. We may rest with unshaken confidence, therefore, upon the infallibility of His teaching, the efficacy of His atonement, and the authority of His commands. It is difficult for us to associate supreme authority and dignity, and even divinity, with one who walks in the vale of poverty, shares the lot of humble men, performs the duties of a servant, and avoids all outward show of earthly pomp and splendor. And yet the lesson of Christ's life is, that real worth, that true nobility, that loftiest moral achievements,

are independent of outward conditions such as men deem essential to greatness. Does it not even teach us that humanity may be a divine thing?

No matter how many years this world may exist, what vast changes may occur, and what wonderful events may transpire, there can never be any example so inspiring, any story so thrilling, any tragedy so melting as the condescension of Christ from the "form of God" to the "form of a servant;" from receiving the homage of angels, to the reception of insults and ignominy at the hands of wicked men, from the joy of the heavenly life to the obedience of death. Nothing can ever equal that; and that is what the apostle holds up before us as the manifestation of the "mind of Christ," saying to us, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

One prominent object of this memorial feast about which we are gathered to-day is to keep before our minds the great fact that Christ's incarnation and death are not only the basis of our hope, but an

example and inspiration of our life. If by participating in this communion to-day, and by this spiritual fellowship with Christ and with one another, we shall be better able to go forth from this place to exemplify the mind of Christ in all lowliness of service, in all patience of suffering, in all willingness of condescension, not counting earthly glory, and position, and fame, prizes to be grasped, but rather to be willingly surrendered, if need be, that we may the better serve our race, then, indeed, shall this institution have accomplished in us the purpose of Him who instituted it. To this end may the dear Lord add His divine blessing!

XXII.

CHRIST THE SOUL'S FOOD.

Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me, and I in him.—*John 6: 53-56.*

THIS passage is understood by some commentators to refer to the Lord's Supper. The truth seems to be, however, that both the Lord's Supper and this language of the Savior refer to the same great spiritual truth, namely: that we live by becoming partakers of Christ; that He is the true life of the soul; that He is the soul's only satisfaction. In the passage just quoted this truth is stated, figuratively, under the familiar terms of eating and drinking. In the Lord's Supper this same truth is set forth pictorial-

ly. The great spiritual truth that underlies the outward act of partaking of the bread and of the wine, is that we partake by faith of Christ's life, and are thus spiritually refreshed and invigorated. It is not true that, by the mere act of partaking of these emblems, we have life in ourselves, that is, eternal life. This is only true of those who partake of Christ in the deeper sense meant by this passage. The Jews stumbled at this saying, and many of his disciples, even, went back from Him because they did not understand its spiritual significance. "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" they murmured among themselves. The great fact set forth by the Lord's Supper and stated in these figurative terms—that the soul can find true satisfaction only in Christ—was hidden from their dull eyes. Like many others since their day, they stumbled at the too literal understanding of Christ's words.

Jesus said to the woman at the well, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but

the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water, springing up unto eternal life." Here is the same great truth stated, on another occasion, and in different words, by the same great Teacher. Whoso believeth on Jesus Christ with all his heart, with a loving, obedient faith, thereby becomes a partaker of the life of Christ. Figuratively speaking, such an one is eating the flesh of Christ and drinking His blood.

This is a high claim which Christ makes for Himself and for His religion. He claims to furnish the only food that will satisfy the soul's hunger, the only drink that will quench the soul's thirst. If this be true, all other religions at best are only partial remedies for the soul's needs. They do not meet its deepest wants, they do not satisfy its most earnest longings. Is not this the basal fact on which Christ bases His great commission to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature?" There is urgent necessity for this if His gospel contains the

only remedy for sin and the only rest for the weary soul.

How does our own experience conform to this teaching of the Savior? Have we not found it true that Christ alone can meet the needs of the soul? One of our deepest needs is forgiveness of sin. Have we ever found forgiveness of sin anywhere outside of Christ? We need to be reconciled to God, and to feel that He is our loving Father. Who but Christ can lead us into reconciliation with God and show us the Father? How the soul longs for fellowship with God, the living God! How it yearns for that friendship and sympathy which Christ only can give! How the soul craves some knowledge of the life beyond—its reality and its nature! Who was it that brought “life and immortality to light,” except our Lord Jesus Christ? These profound and enduring wants of the soul are supplied nowhere else than in Christ. How strong the soul may become when fed by such truths, and such hopes, and such inspirations! These are what we are to feed on.

They are the soul's food. Think of the perishing multitudes who are striving to satisfy their soul's deep hunger with fleshly indulgences and sensual enjoyments. These must be taught that Christ came to be the food of the higher nature, that they "might have life, and that more abundantly."

If this coming to the Lord's table means no more to us than the mere outward act of partaking of the bread and of the wine, and a transient remembrance of Christ, our souls will derive little benefit from it; but if by means of these outward symbols we enter into real spiritual fellowship with Christ, and by faith feed upon the great truths which He taught, and participate in the life which he lived, then, indeed we have eternal life and He will raise us up at the last day. For to enter into fellowship with Christ is to live the eternal life. That life begins here and continues in unbroken continuity across the line which men call death. It is endless because it is divine. It partakes of the nature of God. What a blessed priv-

ilege it is, then, to be permitted to come to this memorial feast, and to signify, by our participation therein, the greater fact that our souls are feeding on Christ's life and that we are living by Him! May this truth sink deeply into all our hearts! And may we be able to look away from this literal table and its symbols, and from this gathering of disciples, to that great spiritual feast prepared for the faithful in the heavenly kingdom at which shall sit down the redeemed of God out of every nation, and kindred, and tribe, and tongue, to partake, with our glorified Master, of the higher joys and blessings of heaven! We shall there feed on Christ, not by faith only, but by open vision, for we shall see Him as He is and be transformed into His image.

XXIII.

LIFE THROUGH DEATH.

The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit.—*John* 12: 23, 24.

IT had been one of the most exciting and eventful days in the life of Jesus. In the morning a great multitude who had come to Jerusalem to attend the Feast of the Passover, having heard that Jesus was coming, went forth to meet him with palm branches, as he came over the slope of Olivet, and shouted: “Hosanna: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel.” So great was this demonstration of joy among the common people that the jealous Pharisees said, one to another, “Behold how ye prevail nothing; lo, the world is gone after him.” Among those who

had gone up to the feast were some Greeks, presumably proselytes to the Jewish faith and worship. There is an ancient tradition that these Greeks were messengers from the king of Edessa, who came to bring an offer of asylum to Jesus if He would go to that country. At any rate they came to Philip and requested an interview with Jesus. After Philip had consulted with Andrew about the propriety of the introduction, they both came to Jesus about the matter, and the reply of Jesus is: "The hour is come that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit."

Strange reply to such a request, it would seem at first thought. And yet on reflection, it is not difficult to trace the under-current of thought which probably connected this request of the Greeks with this reply. The coming of these representatives from the most cultured people of the world seems to have reminded

Him that all nations were to come to Him and that the isles were to wait for His law. But with that thought of dominion over the world comes the memory of the solemn truth, that He is to mount to the throne of power only by treading the path of humiliation, suffering and death. In what way could He have expressed that truth so clearly and so naturally as by the illustration from nature which He employs, about the grain of wheat dying in order to glorify itself in a multiplication of life? Let us seek to grasp the Master's thought, and learn the lesson he would teach.

These Greeks had heard of the wonderful works of Jesus, of His feeding the hungry multitudes, stilling the tempest, healing the sick, and even raising the dead; and they had doubtless heard, too, that He was a great Teacher. They would know more about this wonderful personage; they would see Him, hear Him, and witness some of His miracles, and thus understand the secret of His power. If He were, indeed, a wiser

teacher than Socrates or Plato, they would be glad to hear Him unfold the deep mysteries of life. Was it not in this spirit that a Greek would most likely request to "see Jesus?" If so, Jesus knew it, and how completely and profoundly does his answer meet the whole scheme of Grecian thought, as to the world's salvation. Not by philosophy, not by art, not by education alone, can the world be saved. Life can only come through death.

As if He would say, "Yes, the hour of my glorification is come, but alas! how different will be the manner of its realization from that which these Greeks are thinking about! It is in the moral and spiritual world, as it is in the material. Except the grain of wheat fall into the earth and die it abideth alone. It can multiply itself only by dying. Through death the life of the grain appears again, glorified in its new form and multiplied into many grains. So, unless the Son of Man die He would abide alone, the only one of a new type of humanity. But by

my death I will become the Savior of men, and unnumbered millions shall be transformed into my likeness. This, too, is a general law of life in the spiritual world, for whosoever loveth his life so well that he fears to lay it down for others, loses it; but he that holds this mortal life in so light esteem as to sacrifice it for truth and duty, shall find the life eternal."

Here is a profounder philosophy than Socrates or Plato ever taught. Life through death is a law that runs through all worlds. It finds its highest exemplification in Christ, who became a sharer in our flesh and blood in order that "through death He might bring to naught him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Not only so, but the sublime act of surrendering His life for the sins of the world is such a manifestation of the divine compassion for the sinner, and of divine condemnation of sin, as to be the most potent means of

bringing men to the conviction of sin and to reconciliation with God. The story of Christ's death for our sins and His resurrection for our justification, wherever preached, has been the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth. It has raised men from the lowest depths of moral degradation to the high plane of righteousness, as revealed in Christ, and has lifted up savage nations from the grossness of barbarism to the refinements of Christian civilization.

Let it be carefully noted that Christ's idea of a life that is a failure, is one that remains "alone," that does not spiritually multiply itself. Could He not have called twelve legions of angels to rescue Him from the peril of crucifixion and death?

Certainly, but in that event He must abide alone, the only representative of the new and divine order of humanity. That would have been a complete failure of His mission. What shall we say of one of Christ's disciples who is content to save himself, and not willing, at the price

of self-denial and suffering, to save others? Is not his life a failure? What of the church that is content to "abide alone" in a great city, not seeking to multiply itself in the planting of other churches even at the risk of weakening itself? Is it not a failure, as Christ measures success? What of the religious body that is lacking in the missionary spirit, and refuses to give its treasure and its best men and women for the world's evangelization? Is it not out of the line of the divine law of life and growth? O, ye easy-going, unburdened, respectable, comfortable Christians, who have never laid your lives on the altar of Christ's service, resolve, as ye sit at this table to-day, that through self-crucifixion, you will enter upon the real Christian life!

XXIV.

IMITATORS OF GOD.

Be ye, therefore, imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love, even as Christ also loved you, and gave himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for an odor of a sweet smell.—*Eph.* 5: 1.

IN the above text there is illustrated a principle which has frequent applications in the New Testament. A certain line of conduct or element of character is pointed out, and then the example of Christ is adduced as the highest exemplification of the virtue which it is intended to inculcate. Here the Apostle would have Christians to be “imitators of God, as beloved children.” This may seem at first a very high ideal of Christian life, and so, indeed, it is; but it is an ideal which is made possible by virtue of our relationship with God. After all, what is more natural than that the children

should imitate their parents? Who has not noticed that it is often the highest ambition of the little child to act like its papa or mamma? This is what the Apostle would have us do "as beloved children," imitate our divine Father. It cannot prove to be other than a helpful habit for each of us in our daily conduct to ask, concerning every act, Is this God-like? Is it such an act as God would approve? Here is a standard or rule of life which every one who knows God, as He is revealed in Christ, can carry about with him and apply to every issue that comes before him.

But the Apostle would have us to be "imitators of God" in one vital particular which he specifies, namely, that we "walk in love." This walking in love means that our whole course of life, in reference to each other and to the world at large and to God, is to be in love. How else could we be "imitators of God?" for "God is love." In harmony with the principle referred to above, the example of Christ is cited as the measure of love

which Christians should exhibit one toward another and toward the world. We are to "walk in love, even as Christ also loved you and gave Himself up for us." Not only is the example of Christ here held up as the motive and the model of our conduct one toward another, but that sublime exhibition of Christ's love in which He gave Himself up for us is called up as indicating the proper measure of intensity for our love. How often do the apostles summon us to the cross and ask us to sit beneath its shadow and contemplate its suffering victim, offering Himself as a sacrifice to God in our behalf, in order that we may catch the spirit of His life, and walk in His footsteps! Where else could a Christian go to see so well what is the very heart and essence of Christian life? Herein, no doubt, lies the philosophy of the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. It is a pictorial representation of the death of Christ brought constantly before our minds to teach us the great fundamental lesson of loving one another and of sacrificing our-

selves for others' good. If we read aright, this morning, the lesson of this institution, we see in it a divine call to be "imitators of God." It is a summons directed to that which is most divine within us, calling us to strive after the highest things and to imitate the noblest ideal.

How many, alas! are contented to be imitators of men of the world, who seek its honors, its riches and its pleasures, and who live for self, not for God! How many there are who are well content if they feel that they are as good as their neighbors, no matter how far below the divine standard the lives of such neighbors may fall! Many of us, too, are prone to excuse ourselves for the low and imperfect type of Christian life which we represent, by the infirmities of the flesh, or by our unfavorable environment. But this call of the Apostle to be imitators of God, emphasized and reinforced as it is by the example of Christ's sacrifice for us, is a rebuke to any of us who cherish these low ideals or frame these unworthy

excuses. God means that we shall imitate Him and be followers of His Son here in this world, in the flesh, and surrounded by all the temptations of our earthly existence. He does not expect us to do this in our own strength, but through the grace that is offered to us freely in Christ Jesus. We may not plead our inherent weakness as an apology for living habitually on a low plane of Christian life, since God has furnished us the necessary re-enforcement by which we may overcome the evil that is in the world and live true and heroic lives, as many of God's children have done in the past.

We know God only as He is revealed to us in Christ. Those who best understand Christ's character know best God's character. We are imitators of God in the highest and truest sense when we are followers of Christ, not nominally, but in deed and in truth. This brings God nearer to us. We can understand Him better because the divine life is lived under human conditions common to us all, and we can see how God would act were

He in our place. We see, for instance, how he would ignore the honors and the riches of this world as the chief things to be sought and attained; how He would resist temptation; how He would turn away from everything that defiles the soul; how He would have supreme care for the welfare and happiness of others; how He would lay down His human life, if necessary, to save men; what patience He would exhibit toward the weaknesses and errors of His fellow-men, and how He would seek to woo and win them from their evil ways. All these things, and many others, we see in the life of Christ. He, then, is the only infallible standard of Christian living. Shall we not, at each weekly observance of this institution, which brings His love and sacrifice before us so vividly, resolve that, in the strength which He gives, we will strive to be more like Him, in love to God and in all loving service to our fellow-men? Only by so doing will we be able to "walk worthy of the high vocation wherewith we are called."

XXV.

MUTUAL BURDEN BEARING.

Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.—*Gal.* 6: 2.

PERHAPS there is no duty which is more frequently and urgently enjoined upon Christians in the New Testament than that of mutual sympathy, helpfulness, and a tender regard and care for each other. The reason for this is obvious enough. We are mortals, having the infirmities of the flesh, surrounded with temptations and trials, and subjected to bitter disappointments. Every heart has its own burden of grief, but some have burdens heavier than others, and they often grow weary under what seems too much for them to bear alone. Every one who has passed through the discipline of sorrow and suffering, knows by experience that it is a wonderful relief to an

over-burdened soul when another is willing to enter into the fellowship of his sorrow and share it with him. There is no balm for a sad and bruised heart like genuine sympathy. There is no power so efficient in winning an erring brother back to his rightful allegiance to God as a tender, commiserate love, which, making all due allowance for the weakness of the flesh, seeks in humility to lead back the erring one to paths of righteousness. The universal need of mutual sympathy and care for each other, is the ground of these repeated exhortations.

There is no place more appropriate for enforcing this too much neglected duty of mutual burden-bearing than here before the cross, in the presence of these visible emblems of our Lord's sacrifice for us. In such a presence, hard must be the heart, and dull the spiritual vision, which does not feel a sense of gratitude to the great-hearted, sympathetic Christ, who took upon himself the burden of the world's sin and sorrow, and in agony of soul inconceivable and far transcending

the pangs of physical suffering, submitted meekly to the death of the cross for our sakes. This unsolicited act of self-sacrifice was the spontaneous expression of a heart of infinite love. Not that we loved Him, exclaims the Apostle, but that He loved us and gave Himself for us. Here was the highest possible expression of that law of Christ which this text enjoins us to fulfill. The law of Christ is the new commandment which He gave, that we love one another, even as He loved us. This law the Apostle says is fulfilled by bearing one another's burdens. We cannot, therefore, fail to connect this duty of mutual burden-bearing with that great burden which Christ bore for us, and which is visibly represented by these simple emblems.

There is a sense, of course, as the Apostle proceeds to remind us immediately, in which every one must bear his own burden. Each must be responsible to God for himself. The two injunctions coming so close together emphasize both our duty towards others and our indi-

vidual responsibility. It is as if the Apostle had said, "Bear ye one another's burden of weakness and sorrow, for every one must bear his own burden of responsibility." If it be asked how we may bear one another's burdens, love will readily furnish the answer. Love always finds a way of expressing itself and of entering into sympathy with the object loved. It is the most natural thing in the world for one who loves another who is in distress to seek in some way to relieve such distress or to share it. It is wonderful, too, how simple an effort on our part sometimes accomplishes so much in lightening the burdens of others. Sometimes a warm pressure of the hand, a word of sympathy or encouragement, a little act of kindness, will be a ray of sunshine to some soul that is struggling on in darkness. How little it has cost us! What happiness it has afforded another! What the heart hungers for in its hour of trial more than for wealth, or ease, or honor, is the recognition and sympathy from others whose regard and appreciation it

longs for. We cannot, therefore, plead poverty as a reason for not complying with this injunction to "bear one another's burdens." Nothing but poverty of soul and leanness of spirit can disqualify us from helping one another.

The little girl, who, on being asked by her teacher what good she had done during the past week, said, in reply, she had done nothing except, when her little playmate, Bessie, sat apart by herself, at playtime, weeping because she had lost her mother, to go to her, put her arm around her and cry with her, had entered into the real secret of bearing one another's burdens. Nor can we plead as an excuse for leaving others to stagger under their own burdens, unaided by us, that we have our own sorrows and disappointments which make up all the burden that we feel able to bear. The very fact that we have these experiences of sorrow and disappointment qualifies us to be angels of mercy to other sorrowing hearts. Who can so truly and tenderly sympathize with a broken-hearted mother,

laying the form of her beautiful child under the green turf, as one whose own heart has been crushed with the same bereavement, and out of whose bitter experience there has come the peace which passeth understanding? In periods of trouble we instinctively turn for sympathy to those whom we know are not strangers to the discipline of sorrow.

The strange thing about it all is, as our own experience tells us, that when we share our brother's burden we not only lighten his but lessen ours at the same time. There is no remedy, perhaps, for personal sorrow so effectual as the effort to administer consolation to others. The consciousness that we have been the means of dissipating the darkness from some shadowed heart, brings a sense of relief to our own souls which is compensation ample in itself for the little sacrifice it may have caused us. There is no wiser advice to those who have suffered great affliction than to seek out other homes which sorrow has invaded, and seek to brighten them with the promises

and consolations of the Gospel, and by personal sympathy. Surely the method which lightens another's burden, while at the same time it diminishes our own, is worthy of universal practice.

Surely, brothers, there is need for our kindly offices of mutual burden-bearing. How many the burdened hearts, how many the discouraged lives!

"O the world is full of sighs,
Full of sad and weeping eyes;
Help your fallen brother rise,
While the days are going by."

Looking back through more than eighteen centuries of history to the time when Jesus of Nazareth walked this earth, the most marked feature of His ministry, as He rises before us, is His attitude of benignity and kindness and sympathy to all forms of human suffering. It is this that enshrines Him in our hearts and makes Him King of humanity. If we would be lovingly remembered by those who are to succeed us upon the stage of human action, let us be like the Master, going about doing good, bearing one another's burdens, and so fulfilling the law of Christ.

XXVI.

THE GOOD SHEPHERD.

I am the good shepherd; and I know mine own, and mine own know me, even as the Father knoweth me and I know the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.”
—*John* 10: 14, 15.

THIS passage brings before us the beautiful pastoral scene, so common in the East, of the shepherd and his flock. It reminds us of that idyllic poem in the Old Testament—the twenty-third Psalm—with which Jesus must have been familiar. It is to be noted that Jesus claims for Himself the office which the inspired psalmist ascribes to the Lord: “I am the good shepherd.” Some of the traits which mark the good shepherd and distinguish him from the hireling, are given: “I know mine own and mine own know me.” It is a most comforting truth for the disciple of Jesus to-day to realize, not only that he knows Christ, but that he is

known of Christ. It is said that the Oriental shepherd has a name for each sheep in his flock, and that he knows his sheep and is able to call each one by its name, and that the sheep recognize their names, and the voice of the shepherd. Jesus declares that He knows each one of his disciples. This implies that He knows their names, their occupations, their surroundings, their temptations, their trials, their characters, their virtues and their faults; their hopes and their fears; their triumphs and their failures.

The realization of this fact ought to intensify our feeling of personal relationship to Jesus Christ, and give an increased relish to prayer. If He knows all about us, individually, with what assurance may we go to Him in hours of struggle, and toil, and disappointment, or when we have gone astray, and seek His sympathy, and love, and forgiveness! We are too apt to forget the fact here stated that Christ cares for each individual disciple and knows each one by name, and is watching with deepest inter-

est the progress of each soul in faith and hope and love. We know that Christ cares for the church in its entirety, and for the world, but it is hard for us to realize that He carries each one of us individually on His heart and knows us as His disciples. But this is one of the marks of the good shepherd. What a motive it is for us to unburden our souls in His presence!

The highest evidence, however, that Christ offers that He is the "good shepherd" was his willingness to lay down His life for the sheep. This was sometimes necessary among the shepherds of the East when their flocks were attacked by wild beasts. To run from danger and leave the flock exposed to wolves was characteristic of the hireling, not of the "good shepherd." It is evidence of the prevision of Christ that He saw from the beginning the necessity for laying down His life for humanity. He had come into this world to rescue our race from sin and death. It was His lofty and philanthropic purpose to gather all the

scattered and alienated tribes of men into one loving brotherhood under His own leadership and deliver them from all their foes. But He saw that this divine enterprise involved the necessity of His death. This was to be the supreme proof to the world that He was the true shepherd and not, like others, a pretender. Subsequent history shows that He stood the test, and that He laid down His life for the sheep, that is, for all those who, in any age, would hear His voice and follow Him.

We may well pause, reverently, in the presence of these visible tokens of our Lord's body and blood, to consider the greatness of our debt of gratitude to this "Good Shepherd" who laid down his life for us. If we consider the fierce wolves of human passion which were pursuing us, and how helpless and exposed was our condition without a divine Protector, we can but realize that we owe everything to Him; that we are indebted to Him for all that we are and hope to be in the ages to come. We were wandering far away

from home and God, when the "Good Shepherd" came and sought for us and found us, and brought us back to the fold, and has since guarded us with tender care. How can we ever allow our love for Him to grow cold, or permit ourselves to pursue a course of conduct that would be displeasing to Him?

Let it be noted in this connection that Christ's sacrifice for us was voluntary. He *laid down* His life for us. "No one taketh it away from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." The necessity that prompted His death, therefore, was the necessity of love. He freely and voluntarily surrendered His life for our benefit. What gift have we ever made to Christ to compare with this? What sacrifice have we ever made that is worthy of the name when we compare it with the offering up of Christ's life by the death of the cross? The great constraining motive of Christian life is here shown to be love. So an apostle exclaimed, "The love of Christ constraineth us!"

It was not simply for the sheep which Christ had among the Jews that He was laying down His life. His vision was broad enough to take in other sheep. He saw, what no one else of His age was able to see, that by means of His death the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile would be broken down, and that merely national distinctions would be lost in the higher relationship which men would sustain to Him. "Other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and they shall become one flock, one shepherd." We are better able to understand the far-reaching meaning of these words now than were the disciples who first heard them. We know what Christ's death has accomplished towards unifying the race and making of Jew and Gentile "one new man." Alas, that sectarian rivalry, jealousy and party spirit have marred the unity of Christ's fold, and have erected barriers to separate those whom Christ recognizes as His sheep! But this can

only be temporary. It cannot be that Christ's plan for the unity of men will be permanently thwarted. The Galilean must still conquer, and all barriers to the unity of His followers must and shall be removed.

Let us take away from this table of the Lord, to-day, this deeply-fixed purpose: that since the good Shepherd, Christ, has laid down His life for us, we henceforth will be more attentive to hear His voice and to follow Him, whithersoever He leadeth us.

XXVII.

RECONCILED AND SAVED.

But God commendeth His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by His blood, shall we be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if, while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more being reconciled, shall we be saved by His life; and not only so, but we also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.—*Rom.* 5: 3-11.

THIS is one of those familiar passages which Christians in all ages have delighted to meditate upon, as setting forth in clear light the love of God, the basis of our hope. The Apostle is writing to Christians. He is reminding them of the fact that God had loved the race and manifested His love for it “while we were yet sinners” and “enemies” to God. His argument is that if God’s love was great enough and magnanimous enough to extend favor to us while we were His

“enemies,” surely now, being reconciled to God by the death of His Son, His love will be adequate for our future needs. He will not do less for us, certainly, as friends, than He has done for us as “enemies.” The fact that God loved men, even while they were in a state of rebellion against Him, well enough to give His only beloved Son to die in their behalf, is surely a firm basis for trust in the adequateness of God’s love for all possible needs of the future.

Two things are here said to be accomplished for us through Christ: we are reconciled to God by His death and saved by His life. Let us meditate for a few moments on what is involved in these two words—reconciled and saved. The word *reconciled* implies, what is also said in the passage, that we were “enemies” to God, being alienated from Him through ignorance of His character and of His gracious designs and of our own needs. This was not only the state of the world at large prior to Christ’s death, but it is the present state of all who are in ignorance

of Christ's death, or who, having heard it, have refused to accept it as evidence of God's love. It is a strange and unnatural relation for rational beings to sustain toward their Creator. That such a being should be at enmity with Him who gave him being, and has endowed him with all the powers which he possesses, is a fact so strange that it would seem to require some explanation. That explanation is furnished us in the sinfulness of our depraved natures which we have inherited from sinful progenitors. But, account for the fact as we may, there is no denying it. On every hand we see evidences of man's enmity toward God. His will is contrary to the will of God. God wills that man should be holy, but men delight in those things which are impure and which defile the soul. God wills that men should love one another, but men hate each other and strive to take advantage one of another. God desires that men should love Him because He has created them, and has made abundant provisions for their happiness; but many

hate God and are enemies to His divine government. The Apostle tells us, in another letter, that this alienation from God is through ignorance. Men often dislike each other because they do not understand each other. If men knew God rightly they could but love Him. In God's great desire that men should understand Him and know His love for them, He gave His only begotten Son to die for them. This is the great means of reconciliation with God. When men come to understand that God was in Christ, speaking those words of wonderful love and tenderness and performing those marvelous deeds of benevolence and compassion, they get such a view of the divine character as breaks down all enmity. Men who have thought that God was unfeeling, austere and unmerciful in His judgments, unmindful of the needs of men, and who have, therefore, despised Him, are ready to exclaim, when they look at Him through Christ's teaching, "This is, indeed, a God whom I can love and adore. He is not only pure, and just,

and almighty, and allwise, but He is loving, gracious and compassionate. In a word, He is our Father." This is the effect designed to be accomplished through the preaching of Christ crucified as the wisdom of God and the power of God, and this has always been the effect of such preaching when men have received it by faith. No honest-hearted, right-minded person can be at enmity with the God whom Jesus Christ has revealed. One may have difficulties over some things attributed to God by men who have imperfectly understood His character and His will, but the God whom Jesus reveals fills all the demands of our soul, and wins the affection of our heart.

Let it be noted that the divine purpose concerning man is not fully accomplished by the death of Christ. Reconciliation with God is effected by that means; but we are told that having been reconciled by Christ's death much more shall we be saved by His life. There is salvation, then, that means more than reconciliation with God and is effected through the

life of Christ. There is assimilation of our characters to the divine character. There is a growth in what is true and pure and good, that follows reconciliation and is accomplished through the indwelling life of Christ. This is a great and comforting truth for Christians to learn. It is not in our own strength that we are to achieve the glorious destiny which God has prepared for us. Those who are reconciled to God through Jesus Christ are made partakers of His life, and a new source of strength is thus open to the believer, which reinforces his better nature and enables him to come off conqueror and more than conqueror through Christ. This is the truth which we would impress in this lesson at the table of the Lord. We see here the visible emblems of Christ's death and are reminded of the means of our reconciliation with God. But let us not fail to see also that the Christ who died for us hath risen again and liveth evermore; and that it is through His life that we are going on from one degree of

glory to another and being changed as by the Spirit of God into His divine image. We are not always to conceive of Christ as crucified for us, precious as the fact is; we are to think of Him also as the living and reigning Lord who maketh intercession for us at the right hand of God. If He died for our sins, He also arose again for our justification. We have to do with a living Christ, and we triumph over sin within and without just in proportion as the life of Christ abideth in us.

It is clear from this passage that salvation, in its broadest sense, includes not only forgiveness of sins, but transformation into the likeness of Christ, and this process which begins with our conversion is to proceed until we are presented "faultless before the throne of His glory with exceeding joy." Let us see to it that our observance of this memorial institution shall help us toward the attainment of this high ideal. Let us carry away from this place not only the tender remembrance of Christ's death in our

behalf, but also the joyful fact that He lives and intercedes for us, and that it is through His life that we are at last to achieve an immortal victory.

Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
Let me hide myself in Thee.
Let the water and the blood
From Thy riven side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure,
Cleanse me from its guilt and power.

XXVIII.

GLORYING IN THE CROSS.

But far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me and I unto the world.—*Gal.* 6: 14.

THERE is perhaps no surer test of character than what one glories in. Man is so constituted that he is sure to glory in something. Some glory in wealth and in the magnificence which wealth brings with it. Some glory in their official position or social standing; others in their intellect, and others still in the power which they wield over men. But this text tells of one who, belonging to the brightest galaxy of intellects which have ever illuminated the world, declines to glory in anything save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Surely this cross must stand for something exceedingly vital and important to win the homage of the intellect of such a man as Paul.

The cross in which Paul gloried stands for the whole revelation of love and good will on the part of God for a fallen race which was manifested in the death of Christ. The cross is the symbol of the divine sacrifice made for man's salvation. It is only another name for the gospel of Christ, which the same writer declares elsewhere to be "the power of God unto salvation." In another place "Christ crucified" is declared by him to be not only the "power of God" but the "wisdom of God." These statements of the Apostle show that it was no ordinary thing to which he paid homage when he refused to glory, save in the cross of Christ. This great genius and inspired intellect of the first century saw in that cross and in what the cross stood for, a power that was mightier than the panoplied armies of Rome, and a wisdom that was superior to all the philosophy and learning of ancient, sensuous Greece. It was a power that would subdue the human will, renew the heart and quicken the moral nature of fallen men. He saw

in it a wisdom mightier than that of all the schools, in that it provided a method of effecting reconciliation between God and man, and securing grace and pardon for sinners without doing violence to the principles of the divine government. All this and more did the Apostle see in the cross of Christ. By prophetic vision he looked down the course of the centuries and saw nation after nation and people after people being subdued by its invincible power, enlightened by its heavenly wisdom, and so made partakers of the life and nature of God. He knew what it had done for him, and he believed that what it did for him it could do for all other men. No wonder he could exclaim out of the depths of his heart, "God forbid that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!"

The Apostle sums up what the cross had accomplished for him in the phrase "through which the world hath been crucified unto me and I unto the world." This two-fold crucifixion effected by the

cross is the ground of the Apostle's glorying in it. What meaning are we to attach to the saying that the world was crucified unto Paul and he unto the world? The *world*, in this connection, must stand for the sensuous, fallen world, with its temptations, its allurements, and its sensual gratifications. All these were crucified to Paul by the cross of Christ, that is, they were put to *death* as relates to him. They had ceased to exert any controlling power over him. By means of the cross he had been so transformed in his nature that the world's glittering prizes of wealth, honor and the "pleasures of sin" had ceased to be attractive to him. In the light thrown upon them by the cross of Christ, they were seen to be hollow, transient, deceitful and unsatisfying. The cross, too, had opened new sources of wealth, of joy, and of peace. These were so much superior to those offered by the world that the latter were said to be "crucified," or put to death; and just as the sordid and sensual pleasures of earth had

lost their attractiveness for him by means of the cross, so on the other hand he had been so much changed in his spirit, aspirations and desires that he was wholly unfitted for the enjoyments of these worldly pleasures. So there was a double crucifixion—the world was crucified unto him and he unto the world. It is hard living a Christian life where this crucifixion has not taken place. When the allurements of the world present all their attractiveness to us, and we feel their power, it is exceedingly difficult to resist them, even when the conscience is enlightened to know that it is sinful to yield to their fascination. But when we come to realize the utter worthlessness and vanity of all these worldly prizes offered for the service of sin, it becomes an easy matter to turn away from them to that which is purer, higher and more satisfying. The secret of a joyful life is to be sought in this two-fold crucifixion of the world unto us and us unto the world.

Sitting to-day once more in the pres-

ence of these visible emblems which represent to us that which the cross represented to Paul, it may be helpful to ask our own souls the question whether we have been released by the power of the cross from our servitude to the world—from our love of its fascinating and empty pleasures, so that with singleness of heart we can pursue our Christian calling and find a higher source of happiness open to us by the cross of Christ. He who comes to the consciousness, in his own experience, of the superiority of the joys and blessings of the gospel to all the pleasures of sin, has attained unto full, spiritual freedom; and only such an one can exclaim, with the Apostle, “Far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified unto me and I unto the world.”

XXIX.

THE SUPREME TEST OF DISCIPLESHIP.

But if any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.—*Rom.* 8: 9.

ACCORDING to this inspired declaration there is a condition of true discipleship of more vital importance than all creeds and ordinances. Whatever may be said, truthfully, as to the importance of a correct faith and of a proper obedience to the requirements of the Gospel, it is not inconceivable or impossible that one might be accepted of Christ, having an erroneous creed and without a perfect obedience to the formal commandments of Christ. But it is neither conceivable nor possible that one can be a disciple of Christ without having Christ's spirit. The Apostle declares this to be impossible, and we believe that

all right-thinking Christians are prepared to accept the truth of the statement, not simply upon apostolic authority, but upon its manifest truthfulness. This is the one *sine qua non* of true discipleship.

What, then, it is important to ask, is the Spirit of Christ, without which we are none of His? If we understand the meaning to be that without the mind or disposition of Christ we are none of His, the conclusion would not be wrong, for certainly we cannot be Christ's in the highest sense, without having His mind and disposition. If He was meek and lowly in spirit, if He was tender and compassionate, if He was willing to stoop from the highest station to the lowliest conditions of life in order to lift up the fallen, such a disposition should characterize all His disciples. If we are seeking for honor while He sought not the honor of men; if we are grasping for wealth when He, being rich, became poor for our sakes; if we are living for self and pleasing ourselves, while He lived for

others and pleased not Himself, on what ground, pray, can we claim to belong to Christ? In what sense does He own us? Alas, there are many hopes that are built on the sand!

But the connection in which this language occurs seems to teach that by the "Spirit of Christ" is meant the Holy Spirit. The first part of this same verse reads, "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you." It is probable if not certain that the phrases, "Spirit of God" and the "Spirit of Christ" are equivalents. This makes the gift of the Holy Spirit a very vital and essential matter. It was this same Apostle who asked certain disciples at Corinth, "Have ye received the Holy Spirit since ye believed?" Since the possession of the Spirit is the supreme condition of discipleship, Paul's question was equivalent to asking them if they were disciples of Christ. We lay great stress on the importance of obeying the divine ordinances just as they were delivered unto us, and this is right, for the

spirit of loyalty requires obedience to Christ even in outward forms. But are we not often neglectful about emphasizing what is even more vital than the proper observance of ordinances, the possession of the Spirit of Christ? In so far as this may be true, we preach a mutilated Gospel. We should do the one and not neglect the other. No amount of zeal for a perfect obedience to ordinances can atone for the absence of the Holy Spirit from the believer's heart. He giveth His Holy Spirit to all them that obey Him from the heart.

We may rest assured, however, that if we possess the Holy Spirit we will have the mind and disposition of Christ. Let no one imagine that he is possessed of the Holy Spirit, if he does not bring forth any of the fruit of the Spirit in his life; and the fruit of the Spirit is "love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, temperance." He whose character is adorned with these graces, hath the mind of Christ as well as the Spirit of Christ. Why should we con-

nect this thought of the Holy Spirit as the supreme test of discipleship with the cross of Christ, and with the Lord's Supper? Because it was "through the eternal Spirit" that He "offered Himself without blemish" unto God for our sakes. The highest proof Christ gave to the world that He possessed the Spirit without measure, was the willing sacrifice of Himself upon the cross for the world's redemption. This was the very sublimity of self-renunciation. Does it not follow that without the divine Spirit, shedding abroad in our hearts the love of God, and quickening into activity all the noblest impulses of our nature, we will not be able to present ourselves as "living sacrifices, holy and acceptable unto God, which is our reasonable service?" If this be the essential connection between the possession of the Spirit and the offering of ourselves and all our possessions to the service of Christ, we might find a reason for the general lack of liberality for missionary and benevolent work, in the worldly-mindedness which so

prevails in the church and grieves away the Spirit of God. If so, the greatest lack of the church to-day is a greater appreciation of its need of the Spirit of God, and a more earnest seeking of His divine presence and power. Without His gracious aid we shall not be able to reach those sublime heights of unselfishness which characterized the apostles and martyrs of the first century.

Notice, too, that to have the Holy Spirit in us is to have Christ, for immediately following the text quoted above the Apostle adds: "And if Christ is in you the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness." This magnificent truth, that Christ fulfills the promise to be with His disciples in the gift of the Holy Spirit, is not appreciated at its true value. That Christ comes to the believer and dwells in him to carry on and perfect his salvation, and to impress His own divine image on the believing soul, is a fact that ought to thrill the souls of Christians with the deepest and holiest joy. Christ

in us the hope of glory is the acme of Christian privilege and hope.

May it be that we shall connect more closely in our thought, hereafter, our observance of the Lord's Supper, commemorating Christ's offering for us, with our need of His Spirit by which we may gladly offer ourselves to the service of humanity.

XXX.

UNION OF THE DIVINE AND THE HUMAN.

Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, He also Himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death He might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.—*Heb.* 2: 14.

Whereby He hath granted unto us His precious and exceeding great promises; that through these ye may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world by lust.—*2 Peter* 1: 4.

Two great facts are stated in these passages. It is difficult to say which is the greater. The first fact is that Christ became a partaker of our nature; that the divine stooped down and united itself with the human. This is a marvelous fact, and one which proud reason, disdaining faith, refuses to accept. But the other fact is scarcely less marvelous. It is that man may become a partaker of the divine nature. These two facts constitute the two poles of the gospel. They stand related to each other as cause and

effect. Christ was found in fashion as a man; that men might be fashioned into the divine. It is true that man was originally created in the image of God as to his powers and capacities. But having sinned, the divine image was marred and defaced until but few traces of the divine were left in him. Christ came to restore the divine image in man. In order to do this it was necessary, says the inspired writer, to become a partaker of our nature. "Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, He also Himself partook of the same."

Here is a great spiritual law which must be observed by all who would succeed in Christian work. We must come into actual contact and sympathy with those whom we would lift to a higher plane, and so identify ourselves with them in their interests that their burdens shall be our burdens, their sorrows our sorrows, their joys our joys. The failure to observe this law in many efforts at missionary work at home and abroad, is a cause of much of the failure that has

attended these efforts. When Jesus Christ saw the ruined condition of our race, and its great need of enlightenment and of redemption, He did not dispatch an angel with a message to our fallen world, but He came Himself, the first great Missionary, exchanging the "form of God," for the "form of a servant," that He might enter into the fullest sympathy with our sorrowing and suffering race, and thus lift it up into fellowship with God. There is no gospel without this great, sublime fact. Take the incarnation out of the gospel, and the whole sublime story of the cross loses its charm, its significance, and its power.

But while our minds are filled with wonder at the infinite condescension of Christ in identifying himself with our humanity, let us not lose sight of the fact that through this condescension He made it possible for man to rise above the corruption that is in the world by lust, and to become a partaker of the divine nature. While we look upon these earthly symbols that tell us of a Savior that par-

took of our flesh and blood, that He might, by means of death, destroy him that had the power of death, let us not forget that through the benefits of this death we are enabled to lay aside "all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit," and take on the lineaments of the divine until we are transformed into the likeness of Jesus Christ. This is a daring thought of the Apostle Peter, but it is one declared also by other apostles who share with him the fullness of the illuminating Spirit. The beloved John says: "Now we are children of God, and it is not made manifest what we shall be. We know that if He shall be manifest, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is." Here is the same great truth. As Christ partook of our human nature, so we are to become partakers of His divine nature. Even imagination, in its loftiest flight, cannot soar to any pinnacle of hope higher than that. How can the soul who believes such a truth ever allow itself to be drawn away from God by false attractions of sin? How often we lament our human

weaknesses and imperfections! When we read the lives of apostles and martyrs, and heroic missionaries, and saintly men and women in all ages, who have walked with God until their faces shone with something of His divine glory, how our hearts have yearned to be as they were. But infinitely more than that is this promise of the gospel that we are to be partakers of the divine nature; identified with Christ, so that His triumphs are our triumphs, and His glory our glory.

By what means is it possible to bring men to this glorious destiny? What is the divine plan for weaning men from an inordinate affection for things earthly and temporal, and alluring them Godward until the human is transmuted into the divine? The Apostle Peter declares that it is through the "precious and exceeding great promises" which Christ hath granted unto us that we are to become "partakers of the divine nature." Nothing can be more inspiring than a great promise made by one whose word has never failed, and who has power to per-

form whatever He promises to do. Think of the promises which Christ has made to His followers which are scattered all through the pages of the New Testament! There is the promise of forgiveness; of the Holy Spirit as a Guest and Comforter; of divine love and companionship; of daily supplies of grace and strength; of triumph over all our weaknesses; of resurrection from the dead; of glorified bodies, fashioned like unto the glorious body of Christ. Then there is the promise of the Father's House, with its many mansions; of the place prepared for us by the hand of our Savior, and the joy of being with Him and seeing His glory, and of sharing it with Him. Finally, there is the promise of a fadeless inheritance in a land where sin's blighting effects are unknown, and where there is no more sorrow, neither crying, nor pain, nor death, for evermore, but God shall be with us and be our God, and we shall be His people. Are not these exceeding great and precious promises? Is it possible to exaggerate their value? Do we be-

lieve them? Are we, who sit here in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, before these visible emblems of Christ's body and blood, to sit yonder in the heavens at the great banquet supper—the marriage supper of the Lamb—with the redeemed and glorified out of every nation, and tribe, and tongue? If we believe that, how easy it ought to be for us to go forth from this place to-day to live for Christ, to follow in His lowly footsteps, going about doing good, descending into the homes of poverty and even of crime, that we might lift up those who are our brothers and our sisters, created in the image of God, to make them sharers with us in so glorious a destiny! Not in vain do we commemorate this ordinance, in which are mingled the human and the divine, if by means of it we may the better prepare ourselves and others to be “partakers of the divine nature.” When Christ shall be “formed in us the hope of glory,” then the great end of the gospel will have been realized, and God and man shall be united forever.

XXXI.

CHRIST THE FATHER'S MAGNET.

And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself.—*John* 12: 32.

THERE are moments in all our lives when there come to us clear visions of the meaning of our lives. It was such a moment as this in the life of our Lord when He uttered these remarkable words. The Bible student will remember that it was in connection with the visit of the Greeks who had requested to see Him. The visit of these representatives from the classic land of song and art suggested to Him, what was hidden from His disciples at that time, that His mission included the whole world in its beneficent scope. In connection with this wide reach of the divine philanthropy there came the thought that this world-wide mission was not to be accomplished

except through His death. It was out of a heart filled with these emotions that he exclaimed, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto myself." It is as if He had said, "Not only the Greeks but men out of every nation, and tribe, and tongue, not only of this age but of all succeeding ages, are to come to me, but they can only come as they are drawn by divine power. I cannot draw them except through my death in their behalf, and therefore I am willing to be lifted up that the world may be drawn unto me."

Let us reverently ponder these words of the Master. They seem to unveil to us not only His heart of infinite love, but the profound thought that underlies the divine tragedy of the cross. Let us notice, first, that Christ recognized the fact that the world is away from God, and, therefore, without life and true happiness. This is inevitably so, because man was made for God, and all the great powers and capacities of the soul demand God in order to satisfy them. Union

with God is man's normal relation. Sin and rebellion are abnormal and destructive of the end for which man was created. It was the recognition of this fact that brought Christ to the earth. Man must be brought back to God in order that he may have life and that more abundantly.

Notice again that this union of man with God is to be brought about by moral force. He does not say, "I will *drive* all men to God, or compel them by force to follow me, but I will *draw* all men unto myself." In another passage he had said, "No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him." He now explains how that drawing is to be accomplished. He is the chosen instrument, the divine magnet, which the Father has let down into the world to draw all men unto Himself. Union with God is effected in Christ. He is the meeting-place of God and man. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. Let us understand, then, once for all, that God appeals to man's highest

and best nature in the gospel, and seeks to win man, by the divine beauty and moral power of Christ, to come unto Him.

This moral power which God has ordained to draw men unto Himself is love, the mightiest force in the universe. There is no higher exhibition of love than the laying down of one's life for those loved. "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son," and Christ so loved the world that He gave Himself for us. The gospel is the power of God, but Christ's death is the power of the gospel. The reason why the death of Christ is so potent a force for the world's conversion is, that it is the highest exhibition of divine love for a sinning and dying race. In the light of this truth when this vision of universal conquest came before the mind of Christ, He saw that it was not to be realized through the ordinary force which the world's great conquerors had used, but by a very different power and for a very different purpose. Love must take the

place of the sword, and life, not death, is the end to be gained.

Let us consider again what a compliment to our human nature is implied in this statement of Jesus. It discredits and disproves every doctrine or dogma that teaches that man is so utterly depraved as to be incapable of being influenced by a noble thought or an unselfish act. On the contrary, so far from man's being wholly destitute of any power that can respond to love, Christ says, in effect, "I know men; I have lived among them; I know their frailties, their sins, their moral depravity; but I know, too, that there slumbers in every human heart an element of the divine which will respond to the touch of divine love, and I, when I am lifted up, upon the cross, so that the world may see how I loved them, and how God loves them, will draw all men unto myself. They will resist force or parry argument with argument, but they will not always resist love, and I will draw them to me by the cords of love." Is it in any human heart to disappoint this

expectation of Christ, or postpone its fulfillment? Has He over-estimated our human nature in prophesying that His death would be the means of drawing all men unto Him? As a matter of fact men do resist this highest appeal of love, and refuse to come to Christ, but they do so in direct opposition to the better impulses of their own nature, and in violation of their own highest ideals of what is right and true and noble. Man can resist omnipotence if he chooses so to do, but in resisting the drawings of an infinite love he does violence to His own nature as well as to that of God.

Finally, let us pause a moment here before the cross to ask ourselves, reverently, what is the secret of this mysterious drawing power of the uplifted Christ. Attraction and gravitation are names for a force that pervades the universe and holds in balance all worlds, and yet who understands it? Why should one body attract another? Why does the mysterious magnet when brought into proximity to iron or steel, draw them unto itself,

causing them to leap from their places of repose, through space, and adhere to it? We do not know. Science can only tell us that the magnet is a positive force and that the substances drawn to it are negative, and that there is an attraction between the positive and the negative. That is to say, there is something in the magnet for which the iron and the steel have an affinity, and they are drawn to it. There is in the one what is lacking in the other, and the union supplies this need. Herein, no doubt, lies the explanation of the drawing power of Christ. There is in Him, uplifted, crucified and dying for the world, that which men reverence, admire, need. The riches of Christ's character are an attraction for our spiritual poverty. The wealth of His divine love and grace appeals mightily to our sense of guilt and need of pardon. The infinite life that abounds in Him is a mighty attractive power for a dying world. All the elements of grace and truth which the human heart in its best moments feels that it needs, are furnished in Christ; and

so we are drawn to Him by the positive force of his glorious personality, and the negative power of our own necessities. The marvel is that the whole world, whithersoever the gospel has gone, has not been drawn into His loving embrace. Let us not leave this sacred place, nor close our eyes to this vision of the cross, until we inwardly resolve to yield ourselves more wholly to the tender drawings of His infinite love, until we shall find in Him that fullness of life and perfection of character which our hearts crave.

XXXII.

THE COMMUNION OF SAINTS.

The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a communion of the body of Christ? seeing that we, who are many, are one bread, one body: for we all partake of the one bread.—1 *Cor.* 10: 16, 17.

THE apostle is here warning the brethren at Corinth against the sin of idolatry. He had just cited some facts in the history of Israel, showing the terrible results of their apostasy from God during their journeying in the wilderness. Applying the lesson to those to whom he has written, he urged them in the tender phrase of “my beloved” to “flee from idolatry.” Strange that Christians, even at that age, should need such a warning; and yet the Apostle John also says, “Little children, keep yourselves from idols.”

It is not at all improbable that the church of to-day stands in need of the

same warning. True, there is little danger that in our enlightened age and country men will pay homage to the mythical deities of the heathen world; but idolatry, in its essence, is giving to anything or to any being the homage and obedience due only to God. In this sense it is not difficult to see that the Christians of our day are in as much danger of idolatry as those of any past age. There may be the idol of creeds, of certain forms of ecclesiasticism, of denominational fealty, of worldly ambition, of love of gain, or of the pleasures of this world. It is easy for Christians to allow themselves to drift unconsciously under the control of any one of these absorbing passions to such a degree as to practically dethrone God. What is this but idolatry?

But we pass from the danger of idolatry to the argument which the apostle makes in the foregoing passage against it. He reminds the Corinthian brethren that "the cup of blessing which we bless" is "a communion of the blood of Christ," and that "the bread which we break

is a communion of the body of Christ.” This word communion (*koinonia*) means more than *participation* or *communication*. It means fellowship—the common sharing of the blessings of Christ and association with Him, and with one another. The bread and wine are the media through which this communion is enjoyed. Through this divine institution, the Apostle declares that we have fellowship with one another and jointly with the Lord Jesus Christ. How inconsistent, then, for those who have entered into this close partnership with Jesus Christ, to be idolaters and defile themselves with the cup of demons! Is it any less inconsistent for Christians of our day to profess by their participation in this institution their close and intimate communion with Christ, and then be absorbed in pursuits and ambitions that are wholly worldly, at war with the Spirit? If the Apostle Paul could use the spiritual meaning of this ordinance as a communion with Christ, to show his brethren the incongruity of their idolatrous prac-

tices with such communion, may we not with equal force use it in the same way to point out to the Christians of our day the importance of abstaining from all unholy companionships and fellowships which will tend to weaken and destroy their allegiance to God, and interrupt their fellowship with their brethren?

Consider for a moment, beloved, the high privilege conferred upon us in being permitted to come to this table of the Lord. If it be a great privilege and honor to be associated with the great men of earth, who fill positions of high trust and responsibility, and whose names are emblazoned on the pages of history, how much greater the honor, how much more sacred the privilege, of "sitting together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus," and of entering into communion, not only with the purest and noblest souls of all the ages, but with God the Father, with Jesus Christ his Son, and with the Holy Spirit! This is, indeed, a high and holy fellowship. It is difficult for us to realize it. Our eyes are so holden, and

our vision so obscured by worldly objects, that it is with difficulty we can realize that through these simple, visible emblems we are really brought into communion with the whole body of Christ, and with Christ Himself, exalted and glorified, but always present with His assembled church. A realization of this fact would prevent many of us from associating with evil companions, and of engaging in practices and amusements which we know to be inconsistent with such a high and holy relation.

Let us note, also, the argument which Paul makes for unity in this passage. "We who are many," he says, "are one body, one bread; for we all partake of the one bread." The marginal reading in the Revised Version seems to us clearer: "Seeing that there is one bread, we who are many are one body." Just as the bread is one in its nature, substance and meaning, though broken into many pieces, "so we being many members are one body." The fact that the bread is one and that through this one bread we

all enter into communion with the same Christ, argues the unity of the members of Christ's body, which is His church. The association is very close here, in the Apostle's thought, between fellowship with Christ and fellowship with one another; or between union with Christ and union with one another. This close connection obtains everywhere in the New Testament. The apostle John declares that "if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John 1: 7.) Not by walking in darkness or in paths of disobedience can we have fellowship one with another, but only as we walk in the light of Christ and receive cleansing from all sin, can we enter into this twofold fellowship with God and with one another. Our divisions occur, not in the realm of the spiritual, but in that of the carnal. Beloved, let us remember that our fellowship with one another is based on our fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Let these solemn symbols of Christ's body

and blood, through which we enter into communion with Him and with one another, remind us of the sacredness and closeness of our fellowship with God, and of our communion together in His Son. Let us realize and enjoy the communion of saints, growing out of our communion with the Lord Jesus Christ. And may the remembrance of these high and holy relationships keep us near to God and close to each other until we enter at last into the perfect fellowship of the saints in light!

XXXIII.

LIVING UNTO GOD.

But if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him; knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death no more hath dominion over him. For the death that he died, he died unto sin once; but the life that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus.—*Rom.* 6: 8-11.

THE chapter of which this passage is a part is an argument against the legalistic objection of the Jews to the doctrine of grace, that it encourages a continuance in sin to the end that grace may abound. The Apostle shows that this is an impossibility, that the very nature of the grace conferred on men through Jesus Christ our Lord, and its results, forbid any such conclusion. He asks the question, “We who die to sin, how shall we any longer live therein?” If the effect of Christ’s death on the believer is to produce death to sin, as the doctrine of

Christ teaches, how can it be alleged as an objection to such doctrine that those who have thus died may continue in sin? This leads the Apostle to refer to the believer's baptism into the death of Christ, whereby he was buried with Him through baptism into death: "that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life." This "newness of life" is in contrast with continuing in sin. The former and not the latter, he argues, must be the result of our death with Christ. Throughout this chapter sin is conceived of as a master, exercising dominion over men. But Christ, who Himself was sinless, died because of sin that He might destroy the dominion of sin over the lives of men. Those who believe in Christ, in His divine mission and in His sinless life, and who accept His sacrificial death as the means of deliverance from sin, are regarded as having died with Christ, and as having risen with Him, sharing His triumph over sin and His "newness of life." But this

death of Christ was once for all. Death has no more dominion over Him. He now liveth forevermore "and the life that He liveth, He liveth unto God," freed from the restraints and hindrances of sin. The important conclusion which the apostle deduces from these facts is stated as follows: "Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus."

There is a great deal in the way we regard our relations in life. It may almost be said that the differences in character among men are the result of the different ways in which they conceive of their relations to God, to one another and to human life. A Christian man, according to Paul, should reckon himself to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus. He should conceive of himself as having been freed from the tyrannous master—sin—and as sustaining an attitude of independence toward it. This way of looking upon his relation to sin will have a powerful effect upon his life. He will not forget the fact that he has

been rescued from his former bondage to sin through the grace of Christ Jesus, upon whom he must continue to rely for strength to maintain his freedom. As a slave who has been made free would hardly think of returning to his life of bitter bondage and voluntarily putting himself in subjection to his former master, so the apostle conceives it would be utterly inconsistent for the believer, who by the grace of Christ has been freed from the bondage of sin, to return again to his former bondage by yielding subjection to his old master and continuing the life of sin.

But it is not enough for the Christian to be dead unto sin, that is, separated from it and refusing to serve it longer as a master. The Christian life is more than a negation. It is not enough to "abhor that which is evil;" we must also "cleave to that which is good." So the positive side of our Christian relationship is that we live unto God. We have left a cruel, unjust and tyrannical master in forsaking sin, but we have also entered into the ser-

vice of another Master who is gracious and merciful, and whose whole purpose in calling us to His service is to make us free and to develop within us all that is noblest and purest and best, that we may realize the end for which we were created! We are, indeed, free, but not free from the necessity of service, of conflict and of constant effort in behalf of the right and the true and the good. We are free from sin, but we are the servants of God. As we have heretofore, while in the service of sin, yielded our members readily as instruments of unrighteousness, so now, the apostle argues, having chosen a new master, we should yield our members—hands, feet, eyes, ears, minds, hearts, conscience and wills—as instruments of righteousness. If we did the former readily when the end was death, how much more willingly should we do the latter when the end thereof is everlasting life!

What is it to live unto God? It is very much more than many of us have conceived. We can only live in the true sense of the word as we are brought into

right relations with God. Life is union with God. Death is separation from Him. The end of all true education, of all religious faith, of all church life, is to bring the soul into union with God. That is life. But to be in union with God—what is that? It is to live as God would have us live. It is to do His will and not our own. It is to obey His laws as they are written, not simply on the pages of revelation in the inspired Volume, but as they are manifest in our own nature and in all the material world. Science is now giving prominence to a truth which the Bible has long taught us—the immanence of God in nature. We are learning now to think of God, not as existing far away in some remote part of the universe, outside of the world He has created and set going, but as in the world, manifesting His presence, His power and His providence in the ceaseless ongoing of all the processes of nature, and of history, and in the experiences of human life. In every flower that opens its tiny petals to the sun-light, in every bursting seed, in every

cloud that pours down its showers of blessing, in rising and setting suns, in the changing seasons of the year, in birth and in death—in all these things God is speaking to us and manifesting His presence and His power. But especially in the deep recesses of our own souls, in the voice of conscience approving or rebuking us, does God manifest His will and seek to lead us in the way of righteousness. To live unto God, fully, is to bring our whole nature, mind, heart and body, into subjection to the will of God as it manifests itself in all the ways we have mentioned.

It was this sublime mission that brought Jesus Christ into the world. He came that we might have life and that we might have it more abundantly. To this end He showed us how to live; to this end He died the cruel death of the cross that He might thereby break the chains of our slavery and deliver us from the bondage of sin and make us God's free men. It is this fact that gives significance to this ordinance which we here commemorate.

These simple elements speak to our hearts in the silent language of symbolism, calling us away from the service of sin, reminding us that, having been freed from the bondage of sin, we are henceforth to live unto God, and not unto sin, or unto self. O, that we might have the wisdom to-day to receive this lesson and to go forth from this place resolved to bring our whole being into more complete harmony with the will of God than we have ever done, that our lives may be truer, fuller and richer, and hence a greater blessing to mankind!

XXXIV.

EXPEDIENCY OF CHRIST'S DEPARTURE.

Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go I will send Him unto you.—*John 16: 7.*

THE hearts of the disciples had been filled with grief at Christ's mention of His departure. For more than three years they had shared His intimate companionship. They had listened to His marvelous words and had witnessed His wonderful works. They had seen him in hours of temptation, weariness, hunger and sorrow. Some of them had been permitted to behold Him in the glory of His transfiguration. They had come to look upon Him as their wisest, strongest and truest friend. He had given them thoughts of God, of man, of duty, and of destiny, that the world had not before received. They had

learned to love Him tenderly, although they were not able to comprehend fully either His person or His mission. It was impossible for them to realize that it was through humiliation, suffering and death that Christ was to establish His kingdom and fulfill his great mission in the world. When, therefore, as the time drew near when He was to offer Himself for the sins of the world, He told them plainly that He was about to leave them, and they would see him no more, no wonder their hearts were filled with sorrow. Their eyes were too dim with tears to see the reasons for His leaving them. They had fondly hoped to spend all their lives in the sunshine of His presence, and to feast their souls on His divine counsel. But now they are told that in a little while they shall see Him no more, and He added what must have sounded very strange to them—that it was expedient that He should go away—that it was best for them.

How well this incident falls in with our own experiences in life! We, too,

have stood in the presence of what seemed to us a great calamity, and when our faith in God's providence has whispered to us, "It is needful for you," our hearts have been sorrowful and puzzled to understand God's ways with us as much as were these early disciples to understand Christ's plan for redeeming the world. We, too, are "little children," as Christ affectionately terms His disciples, and are not able to understand the wisdom of all our Father does. May these words of the Master teach us to submit unquestioningly to His providences, not doubting that they are expedient for us, being intended for our good. After awhile, when life's mists shall have all cleared away, and the light of eternity shall have illuminated all the dark problems that perplex us here, no doubt we shall see and realize that these bitter experiences of life which we cannot now understand, were, indeed, expedient for us.

What are we to understand by this going away of Jesus? In the light of

facts we can see what it meant to Christ: that it was expedient that He should die upon the cross for the sins of men, that He should be buried, that He should rise again the third day, and that He should ascend to His Father and to our Father. This was the way in which He was to go. It was not His to be transported, like Elijah the Tishbite, from the banks of the Jordan in a chariot of fire, without having tasted the bitterness of death. It was His, rather, to tread the *via dolorosa*, and by means of crucifixion enter the shadows of death, and to pass through the sepulchre on His way to glory. All this was involved in Christ's departure from His disciples. The only reason assigned here by Jesus why it was expedient that He should go away is, "If I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I go I will send Him unto you." It is not strange if His disciples failed to understand the meaning of these words. It may be doubted whether after the lapse of nearly 2,000 years we are able to

sound the depths of their profound meaning. We know now in the light of that marvelous history which immediately followed the ascension, how essential was the coming of the Advocate. His presence on the Pentecost following the resurrection marks the birth of the organized church in the world. It was by the power of the Holy Spirit that these disciples of Jesus were empowered to proclaim Christ to the world and to explain His divine presence and mission. It was by the power of the Spirit that they were enabled to overcome all their previous fears and doubts, to defy dangers of every kind, and even death itself, in their earnest efforts to extend the kingdom of God. It was this Comforter, the Holy Spirit, that transformed this band of timid, hesitating and doubting disciples into an organized, courageous and victorious church. Jesus had promised His disciples before He went away that He would not leave them orphans, but that He would be with them to comfort, guide and strengthen them. This prom-

ise is fulfilled in the mission of the Holy Spirit, who came to the disciples as the result of Christ's going to the Father. No doubt the disciples came to understand fully why it was expedient that Christ should go away, and that through His going was made possible His abiding presence in the church forever through the Holy Spirit.

We need not pause here, in this meditation, to philosophize on the connection which existed between the going away of Christ and the sending of the Holy Spirit. It is not difficult to see, however, that the work to be accomplished upon the disciples themselves by the death and resurrection of Christ, and by His ascension to the Father, was essential to prepare them for the reception of the Holy Spirit, by the increase of their faith, through which alone the gift of the Spirit is made possible. What is more important to us is the fact itself that Christ's death for us and His ascension to the right hand of God made possible for all of us the priceless and

immeasurable gift of the Holy Spirit. Not to the apostles alone nor to the church of the first century was this promise given, but “unto you and to your children and to all that are afar off.” While it is true, no doubt, that there was given to the apostles and to others of the early church a special measure of the Holy Spirit to fit them for their special tasks and responsibilities, the principle remains that, according to our tasks and responsibilities and the measure of our faith, will the Spirit be given unto us. This fact is of supreme value, and must not be lost sight of if we are to make any worthy progress in Christian life. Dearly beloved, we see before us to-day in these emblems of Christ’s body and blood, not only the memorial of a great fact—Christ’s death for the sins of the world—but a reminder also of a great promise—“I will send you the Comforter.” Let us associate this fact and this promise together in our minds. While we remember to-day with deep and tender gratitude the fact

that Christ loved us and gave Himself for us, let us not forget His sweet and precious promise that during the time of his bodily absence He would send the Holy Spirit, the Advocate, to be with us and abide in us, and may we seek His gracious aid and divine guidance as we strive to present Christ to the world in our conduct and character.

XXXV.

FROM WEALTH TO POVERTY.

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich.—2 *Cor.* 8:9.

THE Apostle in this chapter and the one succeeding it is urging upon the church at Corinth the importance of making a contribution in connection with the churches of Macedonia for the relief of the poor saints in Judea. In presenting the motives for this liberality, Paul refers to the “grace of our Lord Jesus Christ” who, being rich, for “our sakes” became poor that we “through his poverty might become rich.” It would be impossible to conceive of a higher motive for the grace of liberality than the one here mentioned. In this brief passage is condensed the great message of the gospel. Whoever receives into his heart the sublime fact here stated, and the

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motive which lay behind the fact, has received the marrow and fatness of the gospel. Let us reverently contemplate some of the heights and depths of its meaning.

The reference to our Lord Jesus Christ as having been "rich" points, of course, to that period, prior to the incarnation, when Christ existed in the "form of God." It is well to note the fact, in passing, that Paul, then, no less than John, believed and taught the pre-existence of Christ. The assumption of our nature was the beginning of His poverty. He was "rich" prior to that event, and in that far-off period referred to by John when he said, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." He was rich, therefore, in immediate association with God, and in all the wealth of omnipotence, for He Himself was divine. He was rich in creative power and wisdom, for "all things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that hath been made." He was rich in life,

for "in Him was life and the life was the light of men." He was rich in glory, for He was "in the form of God," and thought it not a prize to be seized to be on an equality with God. In his great intercessory prayer, recorded in the 17th chapter of John, He prays: "And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was." On the eve of His return to the Father He only asked that He might be reinvested with that glory which He had with Him before the world was. He was therefore, rich in glory. He was likewise rich in the homage which He received from all celestial intelligences, for it is said of Him in the first chapter of Hebrews, "And let all the angels of God worship Him." Think of the dignity, and majesty, and glory, and the divinity of a being before whom the magnificent intelligences of the celestial world, including Gabriel, and Michael, and all the angels of light would bow in adoring homage, casting their crowns at His

feet! Think of the wealth of association that was His in all the circumstances of His heavenly glory prior to the incarnation! Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor has the heart conceived the glory and splendor of that heavenly world; but all this unspeakable glory, and splendor, and beauty belonged to Christ by virtue of His divine nature. Truly was He "rich."

But from all this heavenly wealth, this personal glory and splendor, He turned away, thinking them not prizes to be seized and held, but rather to be gladly surrendered if thereby He might redeem a lost world. "For our sakes He became poor." "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." From the heights of wealth He stepped down to the depths of poverty. From the "form of God" He stooped down and took the "form of a servant." What condescension was that! This same Apostle declares, in another place, that "He emptied himself" in order that He might make this descent to the earth, and take upon Him

our nature. In assuming a human body it became necessary for Him to lay aside the divine glory and become subject to the conditions of our common human life. Nor was this a transitory visit, such as angels had frequently made to this earth when dispatched from heaven with some message to patriarch, prophet or seer; but He "dwelt among us." He assumed our nature and walked arm in arm with our humanity, sharing our burden of poverty, of sorrow and of grief. If He had been born in the palace of the Cæsars, and heir-apparent to the throne of the Roman Empire, that would have been infinite condescension. But He was to illustrate a new order of royalty, and He passed by the palace of Cæsar to be the son of a carpenter. Neither was He born in the home of the rich, for He was to demonstrate to all the generations of men that earthly riches were not essential to the attainment of the loftiest aims of human life. On the contrary He was born in a stable, cradled in a manger, and reared in a home of

poverty, that He might enter into fullest sympathy with the lowliest conditions of human life. In that humble home at Nazareth He learned the carpenter's trade, and toiled with His hands that He might show to all men the dignity of labor, and the honor attaching to honest toil. Those years of obscurity and toil down at Nazareth are freighted with lessons of encouragement and of inspiration for the great toiling masses of humanity, who in every age have been called on to fulfill that primal law that "in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat thy bread."

When Jesus left the humble life at Nazareth to enter upon His public ministry His life was still one of poverty. On one occasion He said to one who had manifested a desire to go home with Him, "The birds of the air have nests and the foxes have their dens in these mountains, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." Having refused at the hands of Satan the kingdoms, thrones, wealth, and glory of this world,

He was a homeless man, owning not one foot of the earth upon which He trod. Nor was this His deepest poverty. The Apostle, speaking of His condescension, says, "He made himself of no reputation." The cause He came to plead was so unpopular; the kingdom He came to establish was so out of harmony with the conceptions of the religious teachers of His age; the principles of universal charity which He taught so antagonized the bigotry and narrowness of scribe and Pharisee, that His name was cast out as evil, and He was "despised and rejected of men." "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." Even the few disciples that He had gathered about Him, and who had learned to love Him, though they did not understand Him fully, in the hour of His betrayal forsook Him, and He was left to tread the wine-press alone. O! this is poverty, in comparison with which the loss of worldly possessions is not to be mentioned. The darkest hour in any man's life is when his friends forsake him and he finds him-

self alone in the world. O! the loneliness which must have oppressed the heart of the Son of God on that awful night of the betrayal, when His disciples forsook Him and He was led by His enemies before the Sanhedrim, and on the following day to the bar of Pilate! Think of the buffeting, the insults of the cruel mob, the spitting on His face, the mock robe, the scepter, the crown of thorns, and all the indignities that were heaped upon the innocent Sufferer, and compare it with the glory He had with the Father, and the homage and worship which He received from angels and archangels in the heavenly world, and you will understand something of what is meant by His making Himself of no reputation.

There are other ingredients that entered into Christ's cup of poverty, but these, with the results of His poverty, must constitute the theme of another study. Meanwhile let us ponder well the significance of these wonderful facts.

XXXVI.

CHRIST'S POVERTY OUR WEALTH.

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, that ye through his poverty might become rich.—2 *Cor.* 8: 9.

IN OUR previous study we spoke of the riches of Christ in His heavenly estate, and of His subsequent poverty. As elements of that poverty we mentioned His incarnation, His subjection to the conditions of our human life in its lowliest form, His humble birth and life at Nazareth, His homeless condition! as a public teacher, His rejection by the Jewish nation, His desertion by His disciples, even, on the night of His betrayal when there were none to stand by Him and comfort Him in the awful ordeal through which He was passing. In closing that study we indicated that there were yet other ingredients which entered into His cup of poverty. It is now our purpose to

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refer to these and to the riches which have resulted to us therefrom.

Up to the time of Christ's crucifixion, while he had been deserted by the world, and denied even the sympathy of His personal followers, there had beamed upon Him in the darkness of all His earthly experiences the light of His Father's face. But while He hung upon the cross, suffering, the just for the unjust, and when our iniquities were laid upon Him, in the awful darkness of that hour He lost for the moment the vision of His Father's face, and cried out with a breaking heart, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" We are not to suppose for a moment that the Infinite Father was indifferent to the agonies of His suffering Son, but only that His Father's face was not visible through the thick darkness that gathered about the cross and in the midst of the mysterious sufferings which that Son was undergoing. Under these dire circumstances Jesus lost, for the moment, the vision of His Father's face and uttered those pathetic words which have

melted so many hearts, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" We may not enter now into a full understanding of all that is involved in those mysterious words. But it is certain that they carried with them a sense of utter desolation and loneliness and of unspeakable anguish which no soul but that of Christ has ever tasted.

Is there another step in the depths of poverty to be taken? Only one other. Taken down from the cross by friendly hands, His body is laid away in a borrowed sepulchre. A stone is rolled before it and a Roman guard placed around it. Here, in darkness and in death, with hands folded across a pulseless heart, lies the body of Him whom Tennyson calls, "The strong and mighty Son of God." Because of the generations of men who are to go into the darkness of the tomb, He Himself went there that He might descend to the very lowest depths of our poverty and need. Here we seem to have reached the lowest possible depths of poverty.

Dearly beloved, while your hearts are touched at the remembrance of all this bitter poverty endured by the Son of God, do not forget that it was for "your sakes" that He became poor. It was the nature of our poverty that required this sacrifice on the part of One who was rich in the glory of His perfections and in the splendor of all His heavenly associations. We were ignorant and needed a divine-human Teacher; sinful, and needed a sinless One to redeem us from sin; mortal and needed One, who, by means of death, could overcome it, and bring life and immortality to light. These supreme needs made necessary the incarnation and death of Christ. It is through this poverty of Christ that we are rich to-day in the knowledge of God's love for us as indicated by the cross. "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." We are rich in the knowledge of the worth of the human soul, indicated by the price paid for its redemption. No one ever suspected the value of a human being until God gave His Son—His only

begotten Son—to redeem him from sin and from the grave. To know that God loves us and to know the wealth and the sublime possibilities of the human soul as revealed in Christ, is wealth incomparable. We are rich, too, in the knowledge of sins forgiven, and in all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus. Who would exchange the spiritual renewal which He has experienced through faith in Christ, and the consciousness of sonship for all the perishable wealth of earth? We are rich in our relationships and associations. We have come into new relations to God, who is our Father, to Jesus Christ, who is our Brother, to the Holy Spirit, who is our Comforter and our indwelling Guest, and to angels, who are ministering spirits. Because of these relationships we can go to God in the full assurance of faith, and ask the most royal favors in the name of His Son, who has authorized us to use His name. We are heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ. Who can describe the infinite possessions of Him who made all things and by whom all things exist! The

Apostle Paul in making a record of the Christian's possessions, in one place exclaims, "All things are yours!" All things are of God and belong to Him, and we are His children—His spiritual children, made such through the poverty of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is not a beauty or a joy in heaven or on earth that does not belong to the Christian, because of His relation to God.

We have, indeed, beloved, come into a glorious inheritance through the deep poverty of Christ. O, that these mute but significant emblems would remind us to-day not only of Christ's poverty in our behalf, but of the spiritual wealth also that has come to us through this poverty! And may we be duly impressed with the sense of our obligation to Him through whom all these unspeakable blessings and unsearchable riches have come to us. May His divine grace bring us all at last to share His glory and riches in the home which is unshadowed by sin or by death.

XXXVII.

A SYMPATHETIC HIGH PRIEST.

Having then a great high priest, who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need.—*Heb. 4: 14-16.*

THE language of the Hebrew letter is drawn very largely from the Old Testament. Its method of reasoning and its illustrations are determined very largely by the Jewish form of worship. As the Jewish economy had a high priest whose duty it was to “offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins,” so the author of this epistle conceives Jesus Christ as being our high priest. It was important under the old economy to have one for that office who could “bear gently with the ignorant and erring.” It is easy to see that one who was destitute of the

feeling of sympathy with his fellowmen would be unqualified to stand between them and God, and offer gifts and sacrifices in their behalf. But in the Jewish institution the high priest was himself "compassed with infirmity," and by reason of that fact was compelled, "as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins." We have a superior priesthood in the Christian dispensation, in that Jesus Christ the Son of God, though Himself sinless, has, nevertheless, been tempted in all points like as we are, and therefore can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Here is a combination of qualities in our great high priest which no Jewish high priest ever possessed, namely: His divine and sinless nature, and His perfect sympathy with our human weaknesses and infirmities.

Another fact mentioned in connection with our "great high priest" is that He "hath passed through the heavens." He has demonstrated His ability to be an efficient high priest, in that, having shared with us the conditions of our human life,

so as to enter into full sympathy with us, and having suffered the pangs of death in our behalf, He rose from the dead, and ascended on high, passing through the created heavens into heaven itself. For fear that this exaltation of the Son of God might lead some to fear that He was out of sympathy with us, the writer reminds those Hebrew Christians that Jesus had been tempted as they had been, and was fully prepared to be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. Surely a high priest who is the Son of God, who has conquered death and has ascended to His native heaven, and who, by the personal experiences of His life on earth, knows how to sympathize with us who are tempted, is an ideal priest, or, as the writer of this epistle terms Him, "a great High Priest."

A great distinction between our High Priest and the high priest of the Jewish economy is, that while the latter offered the blood of animals as a sacrifice for the sins of the people, our High Priest offered Himself without spot or blemish

as a sin-offering for the world. It is in this fact that the Lord's Supper has its significance and value. The blood of animals could not cleanse the soul from the defilement of sin. There must needs be a better offering than that—such an offering as would not need to be repeated from time to time, but whose efficacy would endure through all generations. Jesus Christ made this offering for us by laying down His life for the sins of the world. This is the great central fact of the gospel. This is why this ordinance has its legitimate place in the public worship, and why the followers of Christ should gather about it in loving and tender remembrance of Him.

The special lesson which this text teaches us, and which we would fain impress on the minds of all, is the sympathy of Jesus. It is easy for us in our troubles and sorrows to go to One who we are sure sympathizes with us. In such times we do not care to see any others. We are sure that many of us have failed to realize how deep and genuine is the

sympathy of Jesus with us in all our trials and afflictions. When we have stumbled or gone out of the way we often fail to remember that while Christ would condemn our faults, He is in profound sympathy with our weakness, and is ready to help us to return to the path of righteousness, and to go forward again in the strength which He supplies. The text recites this fact of Christ's sympathy with us as a reason why we should draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace. There could be no lack of prayerfulness on the part of Christians if they could realize not only the ability but the willingness of Christ to extend to us the needed aid. Our prayers, too, would lose their coldness and formality if we could feel that we were talking in the ears of One whose heart was beating in loving sympathy with all our sorrows. It would be a sweet thing to retire to our closet and commune with Him if we could only realize His oneness with us and His desire to have us tell Him all our troubles and our sins. How glad

we should be to know that the throne of the universe is "a throne of grace," and that we can approach it in all boldness, and seek, not only forgiveness for the past, but grace to sustain us in future times of need!

Dearly beloved, as we gaze upon these emblems to-day, let us be reminded of the sympathetic character of our great High Priest, who is in heaven interceding for us, and let us be encouraged to seek companionship with Him in our daily lives, that His divine sympathy may not only heal the sorrows of our own hearts, but qualify us to be bearers of sympathy to others whose lives are burdened, and whose souls are hungry for love and sympathy. Christ gives His grace in largest measure to those who become helpers of others.

XXXVIII.

KNOWN BY HIS WOUNDS.

And when he said this, he showed unto them his hands and his side. The disciples therefore were glad when they saw the Lord.—*Jno.* 20:20.

[T was on the evening of the day of Christ's resurrection—the first glad Easter day—that the Master appeared suddenly in the midst of the little group of his disciples who had gathered in a closed room for fear of the Jews. As yet his disciples knew not the Scripture that He must rise from the dead. Certain rumors had reached them during the day from the women and others that Jesus had indeed risen from the dead and had appeared to them. But the news seemed too good to be true. "They believed not for joy." Now that the Master stands before them He seeks to convince them of His identity, and in order to do so "He showed unto them

His hands and His side." These wounds, received in the act of crucifixion, would be the most convincing proof that He was the same Jesus who but three days before had been crucified for them.

There is something very tender and pathetic in this scene, as it is brought before us by these simple words of the Evangelist. We seem to see the look of mingled terror, surprise and joy on the faces of the disciples. We can imagine the look of tender love that shone forth from the Savior's eyes as He presents to them His wounded palms and His riven side. It is as if He had said, "You may be mistaken as to my form and feature and voice, but you cannot fail to recognize these wounds as those which I received for you, hanging upon the cross. You remember the nails that were driven through my hands and my feet and the spear that was thrust into my side. Behold, here are the self-same wounds! Their dumb mouths do proclaim, more eloquently than words, that I am the same Jesus who has shared your poverty,

your sorrows, and your cares, and who was betrayed into the hands of sinners and was put to death as it is written in the Scriptures."

We cannot conceive that there lingered any doubt in the minds of those present as to the reality of this appearance of Jesus. It was one of those "infallible proofs" to which Luke refers as having been given to His disciples during the forty days of His sojourn on earth after His resurrection from the dead. Here was visible and tangible proof of His identity. And when the Master departed from their presence, as suddenly as He had come, none of them doubted that they had "seen the Lord." Along with this certitude of knowledge we can easily imagine what joy and hope sprang up in the hearts of these disciples. "He is, indeed, risen," they would exclaim, one to another, "and all our fond hopes and anticipations are not lost, as we had feared." No doubt it took some time for the full meaning of that marvelous event to dawn upon their minds, but

enough was perceived at once to awaken their dead hopes to life again. Not for their sakes alone did the Master appear to these timid and doubting disciples, and exhibit His wounds in proof of His identity, but for all those who, in succeeding ages, having not seen, yet believe on the testimony of these faithful witnesses, that the Christ who was crucified rose again from the dead.

What lessons may we deduce from this incident of the first Easter day? Is not one of them this, that it is a most honorable thing to bear wounds in behalf of a righteous cause? The Master was not ashamed of the wounds He had received upon the cross for humanity. Not for any crime that he had committed, but for the sins of the world he became "obedient into death, even the death of the cross." He received His scars in the great conflict with the powers of darkness in which He won a victory for all ages, and for all the tribes of men. No wonder He was not ashamed to show His hands and His side, nor are we sur-

prised to see, in the Apocalyptic vision on the isle of Patmos, that when the glorified Christ is seen amid the shining ranks of heaven He appears as a Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world. It is, indeed, for this reason that the innumerable throng of the redeemed join in the ascription of praise, saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing."

The incident also naturally suggests the question, "What wounds have we received for the sake of Christ and for the redemption of the world?" Are we not "soldiers of the cross," and "followers of the Lamb?" Have we no battles to fight? No enemies to overcome? Surely if we are faithful soldiers, following the example of our Master, we will bear the scars of honorable and heroic warfare in the cause of truth and righteousness. As the old soldiers, when they gather about their camp-fires, in reunion, tell of their marches and battles, and

point out the wounds they have received in their country's cause, so, also, will it not be a part of the joy of the redeemed in heaven to talk over the conflicts on earth, of battles fought and victories won, and to show the wounds that we received from the enemy while standing up honorably for the right?

As we close this meditation before the cross, is there not a desire in all our hearts, yea, and a purpose, too, to be heroes and heroines in the great warfare with sin, and to bear an honorable part in subduing this world to Christ? If we have learned from this lesson that the path of duty is not always strewn with flowers, but that it is often a difficult and perilous one, and that "we must fight if we would reign," we have gained a truer and worthier conception of Christian life than those who dream of being wafted to heaven "on flowery beds of ease." Even if it were possible for us to gain heaven without enduring hardships and braving dangers for Christ's sake, it

would forever detract from our joy in that land of bliss to feel that we had been saved by the agonies and blood of the sinless Son of God, and while professing to be His disciples and followers, had avoided dangers and shunned crosses, and bore no scars received in defense of His cause.

Beloved, let us leave this hallowed spot, to-day, where, through the medium of symbols, we have been permitted to look upon the wounds of Christ received for us, with a deeper purpose in our hearts to avoid no hardship or cross or conflict that lies in the path of Christian duty, believing that "if we suffer with Christ we shall also reign with Him." Let us now sing with the spirit:

Sure I must fight if I would reign,
Increase my courage, Lord;
I'll bear the toil, endure the pain,
Supported by thy word.

XXXIX.

REASONABLE SERVICE.

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.—*Rom.* 12:1.

No one has known better than Paul how to combine tender persuasion with strong argument. Having, through the previous chapters of this epistle, reasoned in a most profound manner concerning the great principle of justification by faith through the unmerited favor of God as manifested in Christ, he begins this twelfth chapter with an exhortation based on the conclusion which had been reached. Of what avail all this profound argument if it does not lead to a practical result? What is the benefit of logic unless it be translated into life? The end to which all Paul's theology tends is holier and worthier living. The "therefore" in the text quoted points

back to the facts and truths enumerated by the Apostle in the preceding chapter—man's sinfulness; his helpless condition without God; the inability of the law to accomplish his salvation; the gracious gift of God in Christ, whose death in the sinner's behalf accomplished what the law could not do; man's freedom from condemnation in Christ; the riches of God's grace to the believer as evidenced by the gift of His Son, and God's purpose to conform His children into the image of Christ. In view of such mighty facts as these the Apostle might well exhort his brethren to present their bodies a living sacrifice unto God.

All religions have had their sacrifices connected with them. The Christian religion is no exception to this rule. True, we are not called upon, under Christ, to offer the bodies of animals in sacrifice to God, as under the Jewish dispensation, but none the less is the principle of sacrifice an essential part of Christianity. Indeed, it may be said that the sacrifice of self is the characteristic feature of

the Christian religion. This is the meaning of the cross. It stands for this fundamental principle in the teaching and example of Christ. Christianity makes higher demands upon us than Judaism made upon the Jews, inasmuch as the gifts which it offers in return are vastly superior to those received by the Jews. The promises under the Law were chiefly of material blessings; but those under Christ are of spiritual blessings. Moses asked for a tenth of the income of the Jews; Christ asks for all we have and ourselves as well. The great sacrifice which He requires at our hands is that we "present our bodies a living sacrifice," that is, ourselves, with all our powers and capacities. He is not satisfied with one part of our nature. It will not answer to serve Him with the mind, but not with the heart; or with the mind and heart, and not with the body. He has redeemed us entire, as living, conscious, rational, embodied souls, and we are to offer ourselves entire in His service.

It may appear to some at first thought

that this is an unreasonable demand which Christianity makes upon us, but the Apostle declares that it is "our reasonable service." The reasonableness of such service follows from two considerations. First, it is reasonable in view of the fact that we have been redeemed at such a great cost—not with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. God so loved us that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him might not perish, but have everlasting life. Christ so loved us as to give Himself a ransom for us. Is it unreasonable, then, in view of the great sacrifices in our behalf, that we should offer our poor service in return for these favors? All that we have and are and hope to be we owe to God. It is in the highest degree reasonable, therefore, that we should come to Him with all our ransomed powers and say, with Saul of Tarsus, when the light first broke in on his darkened mind: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

In the second place this service is

reasonable because of its nature and purpose. God does not require irrational or arbitrary service at our hands. He asks that we love Him with all our heart, mind and strength, and surely this is not a hard thing to do, in view of the great love He has shown to us. He asks us to put away all sinful practices, all habits or associations of life which in any way injure us in mind, body or spirit. Surely this is not unreasonable. As parents require their children to abstain from those things that are harmful to them, so our Heavenly Father, having lavished upon us His gracious gifts, only asks of us that we abstain from everything that would mar our nature or injure our growth or development. He requires also that we use our abilities in the service of humanity. He says if we love Him we are to show it by having care one for another. Christ teaches that whosoever ministers to the needy, ministers unto Him. We are never serving God more acceptably than when we are caring for the widow and

orphan, visiting the sick, relieving the wants of the needy, comforting the hearts of the sad and disconsolate, and dispelling the darkness of despair with the light of Christian hope and joy. This is indeed a glorious service. It is worthy of the highest order of talent and of the greatest diligence.

It is in the nature of such service to work out the grandest results in our own spiritual growth and perfection. God has ordained that we shall grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, not simply by feeding upon His Word, not simply by acts of worship, helpful as these are, but in unselfish activity and loving ministries to our fellow men. No doubt one reason why there are so many Christians who confess a lack of joy in their Christian lives, and who complain of a lack of spiritual growth, is that there is so much neglect of this "reasonable service" which the Lord requires at our hands. More service would bring more growth, and more sacrifice more joy.

What, then, is the conclusion of the whole matter? Is it not that we are to no longer withhold from God any part of our nature or talents or time, but to offer them all to Him gladly as His due? That this sacrifice on our part is not only needful for humanity, but that it is at the same time the surest road to our own happiness? Do not these speaking emblems of our Lord's body and blood tell us of One who, occupying a station of the highest dignity and rank and glory, emptied Himself, and, coming to the earth in "fashion as a man," offered Himself a sacrifice on the altar of humanity? There was no part of His great nature that He withheld from the service of men. He offered Himself as a "living sacrifice," and counted it even a joy to pour out His blood for the redemption of a lost race. "Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and hath given Him a name which is above every name." In a word, what this passage calls for is a *real* consecration of ourselves to God's service. There is danger that we cheap-

en that word, and make it mean but little. If it does not mean that we are to put away from our hearts and lives whatever we know to be contrary to God's will, and to put ourselves under orders to the Lord Jesus to do whatever He would like to have us do, and be whatever He would like to have us be, then we have not the right word and must seek another. Nothing less than this will fill the measure of our Christian obligation.

Wherefore, we beseech you, brethren, by the tender mercies of our God, by the heroic example of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the crying need of a suffering race, to offer yourselves, unreservedly, as living sacrifices holy, and acceptable to God, as your reasonable service. You will find in such service, here, the sweetest joy that earth may know, and hereafter the realization of the fullness of life eternal.

XL.

TRIUMPHANT THROUGH THE LAMB.

They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun strike upon them, nor any heat: for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life: and God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes.—*Rev.* 7: 16, 17.

IT may be doubted if literature presents a more charming picture of peace, contentment and fullness of joy than is here presented. The happy condition thus vividly sketched is predicated of those of whom mention is made in the preceding verses. St. John had been asked by one of the elders, “These which are arrayed in the white robes, who are they, and whence came they?” and he had answered his own question by saying, “These are they which come out of the great tribulation, and they washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they

before the throne of God; and they serve Him day and night in His temple: and He that sitteth on the throne shall spread His tabernacle over them."

We quote this beautiful and most comforting description of the future condition of the righteous to show that the efficacy of Christ's redeeming blood does not exhaust its virtue in the life that now is, but that it reaches forward in the eternity to come. The apocalyptic seer had been permitted to look through an open door into heaven, and describe things which he saw as "things which are to come hereafter." The Lamb in the midst of the throne shows that the cross has not lost its significance in heaven, and that Christ is honored there by the adoring throng, because of the sacrifice of Himself here for the sin of the world. Another of the beautiful visions which greeted his eyes was the white-robed throng before the throne of God. These white robes symbolized their purity and righteousness, which were unsullied by the taint of sin. Not only, then, does the

scene teach us the continuous power of the sacrificial death of Christ, but it reveals to us the consummation of that which we see here only in its beginning. The best of God's saints here upon earth have their faults and imperfections. We who gather here, to-day, to observe this memorial feast in honor of our crucified and risen Lord are painfully conscious of our imperfections and our need of the cleansing power of the blood of Christ. But lest we might be discouraged at the slow progress which we seem to be making toward that perfection for which we sigh, we are graciously vouchsafed this vision, through the seer of Patmos, of the perfected saints in glory. There we see the fulfillment of Paul's statement in the Ephesian letter, that Christ "loved the church, and gave Himself up for it, that He might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word, that *He might present the church to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that it should be holy and*

without blemish.” May it not have been a scene like this, witnessed by Paul when caught up into the third heaven, that enabled him to say to the Philippians with more assurance, “Being confident of this very thing, that He which began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ.” (Phil. 1: 6).

If there be any here to-day who feel that their burdens are unusually heavy, that their crosses are exceedingly difficult to bear, let them find encouragement in this phrase, “*Therefore* are they before the throne of God.” The tribulation through which they had come, together with the washing of their robes, are the conditions through which they came into the blessedness of their present estate. Some of these, no doubt, had suffered martyrdom, and others had endured “great trials of affliction,” through all of which they had maintained their loyalty to Christ. We are justified in regarding our present afflictions and trials as a part of the disciplinary training by which we are to be made fit to associate

with those whom John saw clothed in spotless raiment.

Let us notice again, and more particularly, the happy condition of these glorified saints. They suffer no more the pangs of hunger nor thirst, neither shall they be exposed to the fierce rays of the sun. In a word, all those conditions which embitter our present life in the flesh, and those wants which annoy so large a part of our race, shall be forever absent. There is complete provision for every possible need which these glorified beings may have. The reason assigned for the existence of this glorious condition of things, is one that may well attract our attention and touch our inmost hearts, "For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall be their shepherd, and shall guide them unto fountains of waters of life." Could any assurance be more comforting than this, that the same dear Savior whose death in our behalf we commemorate, and whose whole earthly ministry is described as "going about doing good," is to min-

ister to His disciples in the ages to come and guide them unto fountains of living water? In a former study we showed how Jesus was here the Shepherd of His people, feeding, guiding and protecting them. This lesson gives us a glimpse of the scenes beyond the veil of flesh, and we see our divine Lord still the true and tender Shepherd.

Please notice the term by which our Lord is here designated. It is "the *Lamb* which is in the midst of the throne" that is to be their Shepherd and ours. That is, the same Christ who made the *sacrifice* for us, laying down his life in our behalf, is to shepherd His flock on the everlasting hills. Surely there is no other one whom we would so gladly follow, as He leads us up the mountains of God and beside the pearly stream of the water of life, as the One who, for our sakes, being rich, became poor, and "humbled Himself unto death, even the death of the cross." The significant thought conveyed by the use of this term "Lamb," is, that it was through the

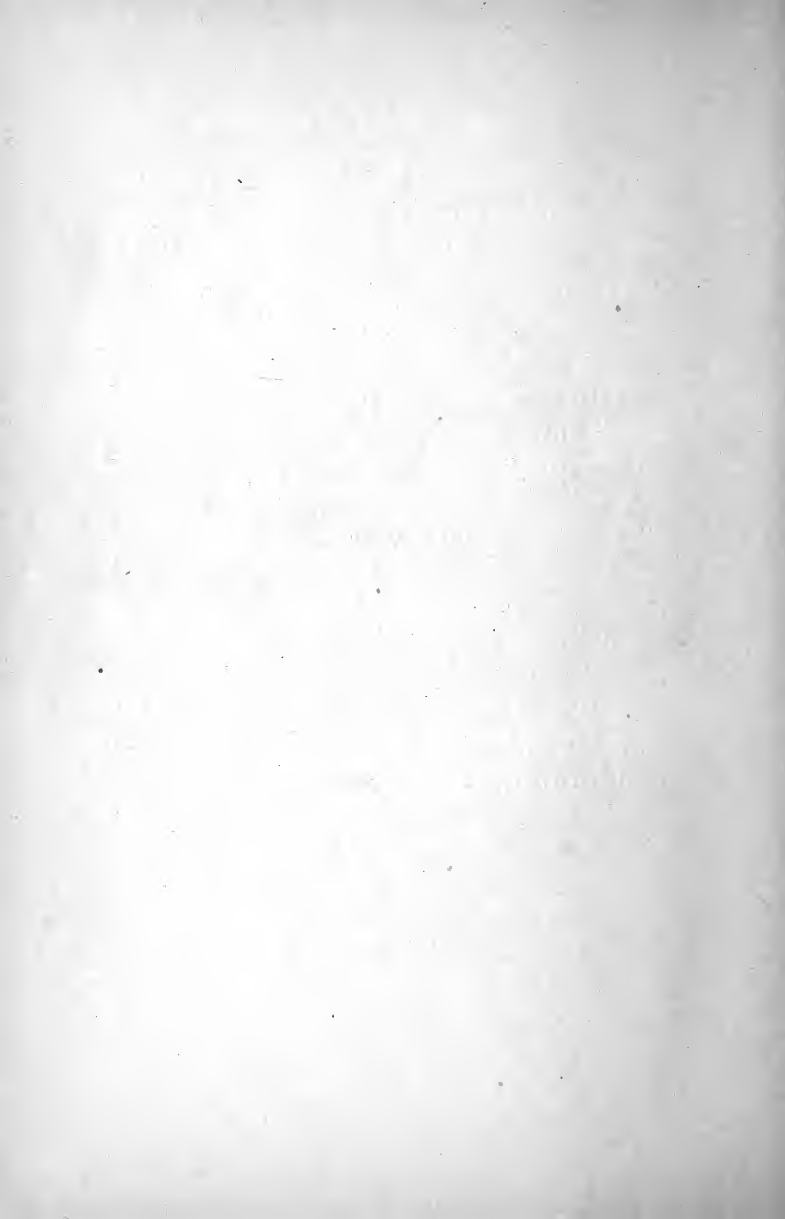
sacrifice which He made for us as the Lamb of God that He has risen to the lofty place in which the vision places Him, "in the midst of the throne." This harmonizes with Paul's statement where, speaking of Christ's humiliation and suffering in our behalf, he says: "*Wherefore* God hath highly exalted Him, and hath given Him a name that is above every name." The lesson which we are to draw from this fact is obvious enough. If self-sacrifice was the law of promotion or exaltation in the case of Jesus Christ, is it *less* so with us, who are the disciples of Christ? Surely the servant is not above his Master. If we, then, are to be "highly exalted" in the world beyond, we must be willing to walk in the lowly footsteps of the Master, living not for self, but for others. This is no doubt, the law of God in all worlds and along all created intelligences.

Let us not omit here the finishing touch in this graphic picture: "And God shall wipe away every tear from their eyes." Alas, how many eyes here on

earth are weary with weeping! There are tears for our own sins, and tears for the sins of those whom we love. There are tears for our own sorrow, and tears for the sorrows of others. We are so knit together by the ties of a common humanity that we cannot be indifferent to the sin and suffering and woe that are all about us. But how different it is with that blessed company which we see, through this open door into heaven! How our hearts long for that sorrowless and tearless land! How sweet it will be, my brethren, to be under the direct tuition of our great Teacher, and to follow the gentle leading of the Good Shepherd as His hand shall guide us along the crystal current of the River of Life! May this vision of "things to come" quicken our zeal and kindle our enthusiasm as we press along our pilgrim way! And may it be ours, when the conflicts and tribulations of this earth-life are past, and we gather no more here around this table of the Lord, to join the company of the redeemed in

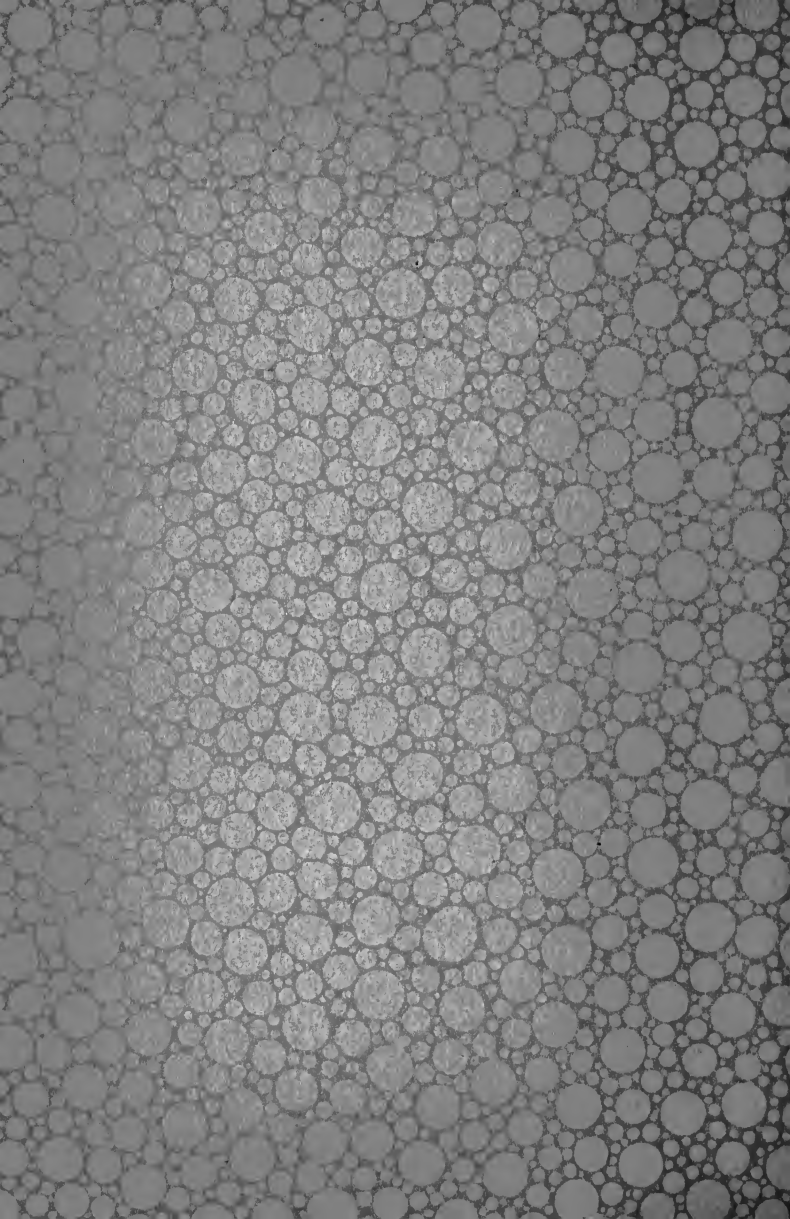
heaven and compose a part of that unnumbered throng that follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth, and share in all their glory and blessedness forever!

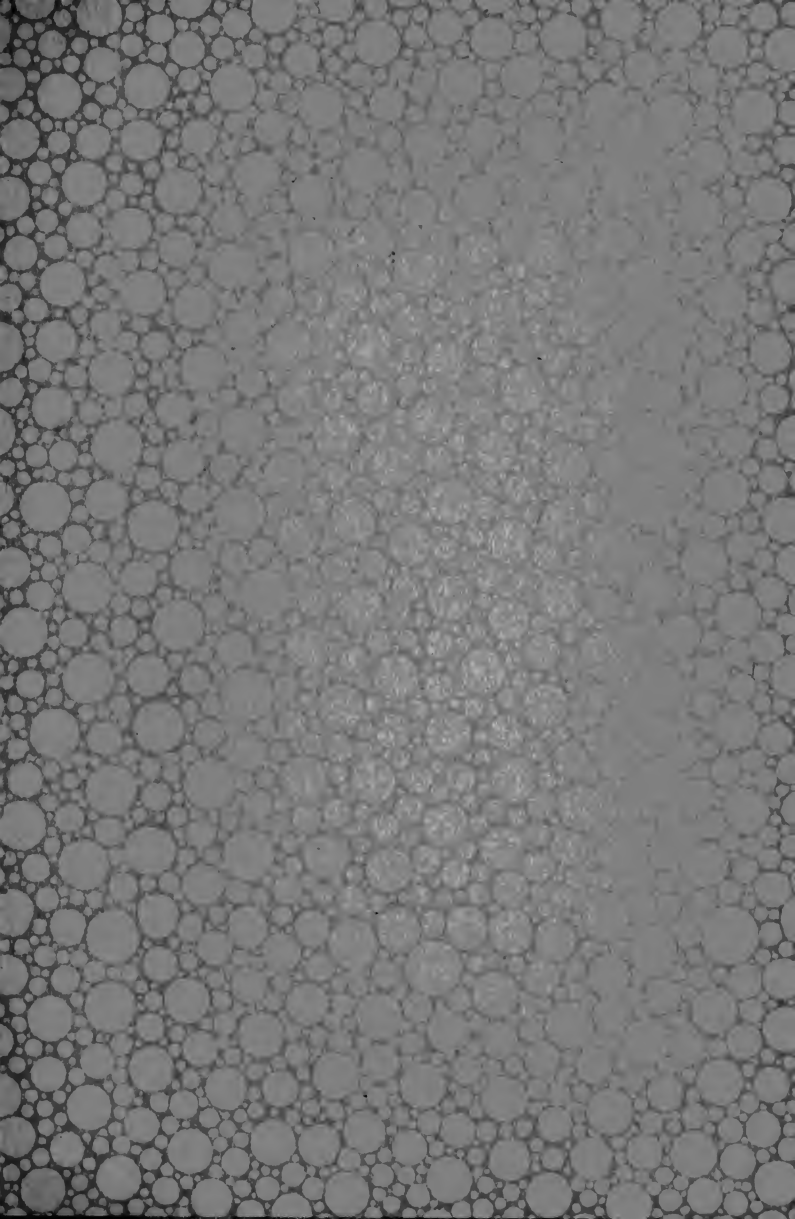
With this glimpse through the "gates ajar" into the blissful future awaiting all the followers of the Lamb, we close these Studies at the Cross, with the sincere prayer that all who have followed us in these meditations may be permitted to sit down together at the great Marriage Supper of the Lamb, and unite in the triumphant celebrations of His name, who "washed us from our sins in His own blood." To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen!











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